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INTRODUCTION
Toward a New History of Interwar Slovenian Political Thought

Over the past two decades, there has been a marked increase in interest in the history of political thought in East Central Europe, particularly in terms of English-language scholarship published by historians working in and on the region. In addition to the growing body of research in this field, some of which we address below, a significant aspect of this scholarly activity has been the publication of source texts translated from various East Central European languages into English, often for the first time. The primary goal of these efforts has been to make original sources accessible to scholars working in and on other East Central European contexts, as well as to a broader global audience. Two initiatives in particular stand out for their importance. The first is the four-volume reader *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe (1770–1945): Texts and Commentaries*, a collection of the most representative source texts on the problem of nation-building and collective identity in East Central Europe from the Enlightenment to the end of the Second World War.[1] Most recently, the impressive volume *Texts and Contexts from the History of*

1 Balázs Trencsényi and Michal Kopeček, eds., *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe (1770–1945): Texts and Commentaries*, vol. 1, *Late Enlightenment: Emergence of the Modern*

Feminism and Women's Rights: East Central Europe, Second Half of the Twentieth Century was released, featuring over one hundred translated texts from multiple languages written by women.[2] Beyond the focus on the region, these readers share a common format: each source is accompanied by a scholarly commentary comprised of a brief biography of the source text author and contextual information to enhance understanding. More than mere collections of translated texts, these volumes serve as extremely valuable entry points into the problems and layers of political thought in and about East Central Europe.

This reader is one such endeavor. Produced as part of a project within the Political History Program at the Institute of Contemporary History in Ljubljana between 2023 and 2025, this volume presents English translations of sixteen primary sources of Slovenian interwar political thought selected by nine contributing authors. Each source is accompanied by a brief biographic note about the source text author—or, in cases where the author is unknown, a description of the periodical in which the text appeared—along with a contextual introduction. The process of preparing the reader began at a workshop held in April 2024 in Ljubljana. The event was attended by scholars specializing in the history of political thought in East Central Europe whose task it was to select one or more sources from the history of Slovenian political thought that could illuminate the broader question of political transformations during the interwar period. The binding element was to select texts which could go beyond what we perceived as a simplistic historiographic framing of the history of interwar Slovenian political thought around three camps: Catholic, liberal, and Marxist. Moreover, we asked the contributors to contextualize the selected sources within broader Yugoslav and transnational contexts. Following the discussion of the sources and

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'National Idea' (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006). Balázs Trencsényi and Michal Kopeček, eds., *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe (1770–1945)*, vol. 2, *National Romanticism: The Formation of National Movements* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007). Ahmet Ersoy, Maciej Górny, and Vangelis Kechriotis, eds., *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe (1770–1945)*, vol. 3/1, *Modernism: The Creation of Nation-States* and vol. 3/2, *Modernism: Representations of National Culture* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2010). Diana Mishkova, Marius Turda, and Balázs Trencsényi, eds., *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe (1770–1945)*, vol. 4, *Anti-Modernism: Radical Revisions of Collective Identity* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2014). For some background to the project, hosted at the Center for Advanced Study Sofia, Bulgaria, see "Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Eastern Europe (1770–1945)," https://idreader.cas.bg/, last accessed October 1, 2025.

2 Zsófia Lóránd, Adela Hîncu, Jovana Mihajlović Trbovc, and Katarzyna Stańczak-Wiślicz, eds., *Texts and Contexts from the History of Feminism and Women's Rights: East Central Europe, Second Half of the Twentieth Century* (Budapest–New York: Central European University Press, 2024). Likewise, the volume is linked to the ongoing European Research Council project "The History of Feminist Political Thought and Women's Rights Discourses in East Central Europe, 1929–2001 (HERESSEE)," led by Zsófia Lóránd at the Institute for Contemporary History (*Institut für Zeitgeschichte*), University of Vienna, https://heressee.univie.ac.at/, last accessed October 1, 2025.

their contexts at the workshop, the authors prepared the biographical notes and contextualizing essays with an awareness of each other's contributions and the broader coherence of the reader as a whole.

Through the reader's central theme of political transformations, our main aim was to explore how Slovenian thinkers engaged with, and responded to, profound shifts in political regimes, ideologies, and institutional frameworks during the interwar period, driven by the collapse of multiethnic empires, the rise of new nation-states, and the widespread crisis of liberal parliamentary systems which had become particularly fragile in East Central Europe. Traditionally framed as an age of "crisis,"[3] the interwar years are increasingly recognized in recent scholarship as a period of far-reaching political and intellectual transformation and experimentation across Europe. Our understanding of the interwar years is in line with the growing body of work which aims to re-value this period not merely as an interval between the First and Second World Wars, but as a distinct era of post-imperial reconfiguration and ideological innovation.[4] For example, Éva Kovács, Raul Cârstocea, and Gábor Egry's recent volume *Ethnicizing Europe* highlights the need to study processes of ethnicization alongside post-First World War violence across Europe. They argue that this requires tracing postwar regimes back to prewar systems of ethnicized legal difference, thereby emphasizing the importance of examining the interwar period within a longer historical framework.[5] Similarly, Klaus Richter and others have examined the interwar period through the lens of the Great Depression, focusing on its broad political, social, and cultural impact in East Central Europe, revealing how it destabilized the liberal international order constructed in the wake of the First World War.[6] In the field of intellectual history, new research has been conducted on the interwar debates over crisis, democracy, and religion in various national and transnational contexts.[7] In his recent monograph, Balázs Trencsényi has argued against the

3 See, for example: Iván Berend, *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe before World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). Agnes Cornell, *Democratic Stability in an Age of Crisis: Reassessing the Interwar Period* (Oxford: University Press, 2020).

4 See, for example, Jan-Werner Müller, *Contesting Democracy. Political Ideas in Twentieth Century Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), particularly chapters 2 (49–90) and 3 (91–124).

5 Éva Kovács, Raul Cârstocea, and Gábor Egry, eds., *Ethnicizing Europe: Hate and Violence after Versailles* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2025), 4.

6 Klaus Richter, Jasmin Nithammer, and Anca Mândru, eds., *The Great Depression in Eastern Europe* (Budapest–New York: Central European University Press, 2025). Klaus Richter, "The Catastrophe of the Present and That of the Future: Expectations for European States from the Great War to the Great Depression," *Contemporary European History* 33, no. 3 (2024): 1002–20.

7 Among others: Maria Falina, "Narrating Democracy in Interwar Yugoslavia: From State Creation to Its Collapse," *Journal of Modern European History* 17, no. 2 (May 2019): 196–208. Maria Falina, *Religion and Politics in Interwar Yugoslavia: Serbian Nationalism and East Orthodox Christianity* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022). Michal Kopeček, "Czechoslovak Interwar Democracy and Its Critical Introspections," *Journal of Modern European History* 17, no. 1 (2019): 7–15.

view of simply denoting the interwar years as "crisis" years and has made a case that it was in large part the "discursive frames, narrative tools, analytical categories, and self-representation of historical actors" who co-created the image of the interwar period as that of crisis-ridden.[8]

We see the Yugoslav and Slovenian story as part of this broader story of the (transnational, European, and global) transformations that occurred in the interwar period. The Slovenian case study is particularly fruitful for showing the variety of positions taken as well as the transformation and fluidity of political thought in this period. The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was established on December 1, 1918; up until early January 1929, the state functioned as a constrained but ultimately parliamentary, constitutional democracy. Yet, following the growing instability of the mid-to-late 1920s and the immediate aftermath of the 1928 assassination of Stjepan Radić and other Croatian Peasant Party representatives in the National Assembly in Belgrade, King Aleksandar Karađorđević declared a royal dictatorship on January 6, 1929. The parliamentary system was abolished in the wake of the introduction of the royal dictatorship, fundamentally altering the political landscape.[9] Various studies have accounted for the dynamic and volatile conditions in which it emerged and evolved. An important example in political history is Dejan Djokić's study of interwar Yugoslavia, in which he challenged the notion that the country's crises stemmed from the existence of fully formed Serbian and Croatian nationalisms prior to 1918. Instead of viewing Yugoslavia as an anomaly in interwar Europe, Djokić argued that its political turmoil resulted from decisions made after 1918. What initially began as a constitutional debate around the question of state centralism eventually evolved into a Serb-Croat conflict.[10] Similarly, in the field of Yugoslav social history, the historians Fabio Giomi and Stefano Petrungaro have examined the shifting dynamics of the interwar period through the lens of voluntary associations and their evolving role in society, showing how the relationship between the state and society changed across the different political regimes in Yugoslavia during the interwar years.[11]

8 Balázs Trencsényi, *Intellectuals and the Crisis of Politics in the Interwar Period and Beyond. A Transnational History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2025), 5. Balázs Trencsényi, Lucija Balikić, Una Blagojević, and Isidora Grubački, eds., *East Central European Crisis Discourses in the Twentieth Century: A Never-Ending Story?* (New York: Routledge, 2025).

9 See, for example: Christian Axboe Nielsen, *Making Yugoslavs: Identity in King Aleksandar's Yugoslavia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014). Marie-Janine Calic, *A History of Yugoslavia* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2014).

10 Dejan Djokić, *Elusive Compromise: A History of Interwar Yugoslavia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

11 Fabio Giomi and Stefano Petrungaro, eds., "Voluntary Associations in Yugoslavia (1918–1941)," *European Review of History* 26, no. 1 (2019): 1–162.

Complementary to these efforts, in this reader we aim to enhance understanding about the ways in which political thought changed and transformed in the interwar period. As we show, political thought in this period did not simply reflect institutional change, but it actively shaped new visions of state, democracy, citizenship, and social justice, among numerous other political ideas and concepts. The central idea for this volume has been that each contribution tells us something precise about the specific moment when the source text was written, published, or spoken: for example, reflecting on the promise of parliamentarism still held in the early 1920s, or rather the catastrophic visions of the late 1930s, when another global war appeared increasingly likely. Simultaneously, each contribution offers a broader view of the transformation of political thought as a collection of texts and contexts with the political transformations discussed in the biographical note and contextualization. Taken together, the contextual essays and the sources are meant to offer a complex image of the interwar moment as a dynamic space in which older political frameworks were adapted and new political languages emerged. The aim is therefore not (only) to trace continuities and ruptures but also to illuminate how political thought evolved and changed through non-linear trajectories. Overall, we hope this reader will reach a wide audience, encompassing students and scholars but also a curious public—in Slovenia, across East Central Europe, and beyond.

As discussed below in detail, this volume offers a snapshot of current research in the history of political thought in East Central Europe. These sources, translated from Slovenian and a few other languages into English, make some aspects of Slovenian political thought accessible to those who do not read Slovenian and are not immediately familiar with the context. The sources, biographies, and contextual introductions provide opportunities for comparative analysis of the trajectories and character of political thought in Slovenia and so also within East Central Europe more broadly. Finally, we hope that this reader, together with the present introduction, will help raise important questions in the pursuit of a more inclusive history of political thought in Slovenia—one that embraces a wider range of political thinkers and moves beyond the traditional framework of the "three camps": Catholics, liberals, and Marxists.

The remainder of the introduction is divided into two main parts. The first, entitled "**Historiographic Overview**," provides a survey of Slovenian historiography on the interwar period. This is an essential context for understanding the texts and political ideas presented in this volume. This section also highlights the relatively marginal position of the history of political thought within Slovenian national historiography, largely due to its development within the field of political science rather than history. The final section of this part then addresses the

canon of Slovenian political thought and how it has been shaped. The second part, "**Framing the Reader**," offers a more detailed discussion of the editorial choices made in compiling this volume. It begins by reflecting on the meaning of "Slovenia" in the context of the reader, then explores how the selected sources serve to diversify and complicate traditional understandings of Slovenian political thought. The section concludes by introducing the sources in chronological order.

I: HISTORIOGRAPHIC OVERVIEW

The Political History of Interwar Slovenia after 1945

In the post-1945 period, the histories of interwar Yugoslavia and Slovenia were not in the foreground. Historiographic focus was rather directed either toward the pre-1918 period or toward an analysis of the partisan struggle. The first overviews of the interwar period appeared only in the 1960s. Ferdo Čulinović's *Jugoslavija između dva rata* (Yugoslavia between the Two World Wars), published in Zagreb in 1961, is considered the first historical overview of the interwar period published in Yugoslavia,[12] whereas the Slovenian historian Metod Mikuž published an overview of interwar Slovenian history in 1965.[13] Most of the new research on the first Yugoslav state was published in the 1970s.[14] Slovenian historiography of the interwar period was almost exclusively concerned with Slovenian history; Slovenian historians did not approach their work from a broader Yugoslav perspective. While these studies primarily dealt with the history of the labor movement and social issues, analysis of the political developments that led to the establishment of the coalition Liberation Front (*Osvobodilna fronta*, OF) in 1941 was also a topical issue. At the time, historians highlighted the Yugoslav dimension, but only when emphasizing Slovenia's role in the establishment of the broader Yugoslav project. One of the fundamental works in the field of Slovenian political history was written by a Serbian historian, Momčilo Zečević,

12 Ferdo Čulinović, *Jugoslavija između dva rata* (Zagreb: JAZU, 1961).

13 Metod Mikuž, *Oris zgodovine Slovencev v stari Jugoslaviji 1917–1941* (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1965).

14 Janko Pleterski, *Prva odločitev Slovencev za Jugoslavijo: politika na domačih tleh med vojno 1914–1918* (Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 1971). Janko Prunk, *Pot krščanskih socialistov v Osvobodilno fronto slovenskega naroda* (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1977). Slavko Kremenšek, *Slovensko študentovsko gibanje 1919–1941* (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1972). Alenka Nedog-Urbančič, *Ljudskofrontno gibanje v Sloveniji: od leta 1935 do 1941* (Ljubljana: Borec, 1978). Miroslav Stiplovšek, *Razmah strokovnega-sindikalnega gibanja na Slovenskem 1918–1922*, vol. 1 (Ljubljana: Partizanska knjiga–Delavska enotnost, 1979).

who analyzed the Slovenian People's Party during the unification of the South Slavic state at the end of the First World War.[15] On the other hand, Slovenian historiography in the socialist period continued to explore the history of Slovenians outside the borders of prewar Yugoslavia.[16]

The period between the two world wars became increasingly popular among Slovenian historians only in the 1990s. This is not surprising, as the interpretation of the interwar period was linked both to the transition to parliamentary democracy and to the independence of Slovenia. Political historians sought answers to questions about Slovenian autonomy/independence and the (non-)democratic nature of the Slovenian space during the interwar period. By examining the interwar period, Slovenian historians explored the origins of Slovenian statehood and, at the same time, distanced themselves from the socialist era. Nevertheless, for the most part,[17] Slovenian historiography did not treat the first Yugoslav state as a mistake, but as prehistory to independence.[18] Bojan Balkovec defined the National Government in Ljubljana during the transition from the Habsburg Monarchy to the South Slavic state as the first Slovenian government,[19] whereas Jurij Perovšek interpreted the independent activity of the National Government in Ljubljana in November 1918 as Slovenian national independence.[20] Ervin Dolenc's 1996 book on cultural policy emphasized the conflict between liberalism and Catholicism, rather than the class struggle highlighted by earlier historians.[21] Historians were also interested in political Catholicism, parliamentary politics, and the political biographies of "great men" forgotten during the socialist period.[22] The establishment of an independent Slovenian state also required new

15 Momčilo Zečević, *Slovenska ljudska stranka in jugoslovansko zedinjenje 1917–1921: Od Majniške deklaracije do Vidovdanske ustave* (Maribor: Obzorja, 1977).

16 Milica Kacin-Wohinz, *Narodnoobrambno gibanje primorskih Slovencev: 1921–1928* (Koper: Lipa–Trieste: Založništvo tržaškega tiska, 1977). Lojze Ude, *Koroško vprašanje* (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1976). Janko Pleterski, Lojze Ude, and Tone Zorn, eds., *Koroški plebiscit: Razprave in članki* (Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 1970).

17 Vasilij Melik, a member of the older generation and an expert on the nineteenth century, surprised many in 1993 with his thesis that the process of unification with the Kingdom of Serbia on December 1, 1918, was a mistake. See Ervin Dolenc, "Slovensko zgodovinopisje o obdobju 1918–1991 po razpadu Jugoslavije," *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 44, no. 2 (2004): 120.

18 Jože Pirjevec, *Jugoslavija, 1918–1992: Nastanek, razvoj ter razpad Karadjordjevićeve in Titove Jugoslavije* (Koper: Lipa, 1995).

19 Bojan Balkovec, *Prva slovenska vlada 1918–1921* (Ljubljana: Znanstveno in publicistično središče, 1992).

20 Jurij Perovšek, *Slovenska osamosvojitev v letu 1918: Študija o slovenski državnosti v Državi Slovencev, Hrvatov in Srbov* (Ljubljana: Modrijan, 1998).

21 Ervin Dolenc, *Kulturni boj: Slovenska kulturna politika v Kraljevini SHS 1918–1929* (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1996).

22 Egon Pelikan, *Akomodacija ideologije političnega katolicizma na Slovenskem* (Maribor: Obzorja, 1997). Andrej Rahten, *Slovenska ljudska stranka v beograjski skupščini: Jugoslovanski klub v parlamentarnem življenju Kraljevine SHS 1919–1929* (Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, ZRC SAZU, 2002). Andrej Rahten, *Pozabljeni slovenski premier: Politična biografija dr. Janka Brejca (1869–1934)* (Klagenfurt – Ljubljana –

research into the period between the two wars in the former Habsburg Littoral, which was subsequently annexed to Italy after the collapse of the empire and marked by the pressure of Italian fascism.[23] The Slovenian–Italian border area has traditionally been burdened by national disputes, fascist violence, anti-fascist resistance and revenge, and migration. In 1993, an official Slovenian–Italian historical commission was established, which, after a long process of coordination, completed a joint text only in 2000.[24]

Historians who began their careers in the early twenty-first century have continued to be interested in the interwar period yet tended to focus less on questions of national statehood than those historians who entered the field during the time of independence and transition to parliamentary democracy and capitalism. Their research explored topics such as political movements during the interwar period, the emergence of women in political life, and the role of religion in regional politics. Some concentrated on institutional histories and focused on the structures of parliamentarism and of political parties, while others pursued social history from the perspective of everyday life, legal records, and women's history.[25] More broadly, the history of women and feminism at the intersection of political, social, and even intellectual history has experienced a great boom.[26] In

Vienna: Mohorjeva založba, 2002). Igor Grdina, *Preroki, doktrinarji, epigoni: Idejni boji na Slovenskem v prvi polovici 20. stoletja* (Ljubljana: Inštitut za civilizacijo in kulturo, 2005).

23 Egon Pelikan, *Tajno delovanje primorske duhovščine pod fašizmom: Primorski krščanski socialci med Vatikanom, fašistično Italijo in slovensko katoliško desnico: Zgodovinsko ozadje romana Kaplan Martin Čedermac* (Ljubljana: Nova revija, 2002). Boris Mlakar, "Zaton Organizacije jugoslovanskih nacionalistov: Orjune pod budnim očesom italjanskih fašističnih oblasti," *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 53, no. 2 (2013): 48–63. Boris Mlakar, "Goriška sredina," *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 37, no. 2 (1997): 325–34. Boris Mlakar, "Fašistična stranka na Primorskem v tridesetih letih 20. stoletja in poskus predstavitve njenega slovenskega članstva," *Acta Histriae* 24, no. 4 (2016): 787–800.

24 *Slovensko-italijanski odnosi 1880–1956: Poročilo Slovensko-italijanske zgodovinsko-kulturne komisije* (Ljubljana: Nova revija, 2001).

25 Jure Gašparič, *SLS pod kraljevo diktaturo: Diktatura kralja Aleksandra in politika Slovenske ljudske stranke v letih 1929–1935* (Ljubljana: Modrijan, 2007). Irena Selišnik, *Prihod žensk na oder slovenske politike* (Ljubljana: Sophia, 2008). Milica Antić Gaber, ed., *Ženske na robovih politike* (Ljubljana: Sophia, 2011). Mateja Ratej, "Politika Slovenske ljudske stranke pred sklenitvijo Blejskega sporazuma leta 1927," *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 45, no. 2 (2005): 43–58. Jure Gašparič, *Hinter den Kulissen des Parlaments. Die jugoslawische Skupština 1919–1941* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 2023). Mateja Ratej, *Rožengrunt: Žensko nasilje v štajerskih kočarskih družinah med svetovnima vojnama* (Ljubljana: Beletrina, 2023).

26 For some more recent publications, see Project EIRENE, accessed May 20, 2025, https://project-eirene.eu/publication/, and works such as: Ana Cergol Paradiž, *»Bela kuga«: ilegalni abortusi in zmanjševanje rodnosti na Slovenskem v obdobju med obema vojnama* (Ljubljana: Založba Univerze v Ljubljani, 2023). Marta Verginella and Urška Strle, eds., *Women and Work in the North-Eastern Adriatic: Postwar Transitions* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2025). Marta Verginella, ed., *Women, Nationalism, and Social Networks in the Habsburg Monarchy, 1848–1918* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2023). For contributions to intellectual history, see Manca G. Renko, "The Woman without Qualities?: The Case of Alice Schalek, Intellectual Labour and Women Intellectuals," *Acta Histriae* 29, no. 4 (2021): 921–46. Isidora Grubački and Kristina Andělova, "Crises of Feminism and Democracy in the Interwar Period. Yugoslav and Czechoslovak Entanglements," in

recent years, successful attempts have been made to contextualize the Slovenian situation within East Central Europe.[27] Despite the emergence of new approaches and a younger generation of Slovenian historians, most works on this period in the past fifteen years have been produced by established political historians.[28] Their focus has remained on interwar politics, diplomatic history, and biographical studies, particularly of key political figures.[29] Research on the Upper Adriatic under fascism has also gained attention, with notable studies on anti-fascist cultural resistance and traumatic events.[30]

The political history of the interwar period in Slovenia is a small but diverse field within Slovenian national historiography, which has mainly dealt with pressing issues of national identity and statehood. After the Second World War, this period was seen as a prelude to the partisan national liberation war, while the interpretation of the period at the end of the socialist era was linked to criticism of socialist historiography and the search for the roots of Slovenian statehood. Historians were also intrigued by the question of party politics and democracy. They also pointed to regional differences, with particular emphasis on the issue of Slovenians under fascist Italy and, to a lesser extent, the issue of Slovenians in Austria. In the last decade and a half, Slovenian historiography on this period has continued to deal with the old dilemmas of national history and the biographies of important actors, although the number of works with a comparative and transnational perspective is growing.

East Central European Crisis Discourses, 159–82; contributions in Lóránd et al., *Texts and Contexts from the History of Feminism and Women's Rights*, e.g., Manca G. Renko, "Angela Vode: The Woman in Contemporary Society (1934)," 98–108.

27 Oskar Mulej, *Liberalism after the Habsburg Monarchy, 1918–1935: National Liberal Heirs in the Czech Lands, Austria, and Slovenia* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2024).

28 Jurij Perovšek, *Samoodločba in federacija: Slovenski komunisti in nacionalno vprašanje 1920–1941* (Ljubljana: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2012). Jurij Perovšek, *O demokraciji in jugoslovanstvu: Slovenski liberalizem v Kraljevini SHS/Jugoslaviji* (Ljubljana: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2013). Jurij Perovšek, *Politika in moderna: Idejnopolitični razvoj, delovanje in zareze v slovenski politiki od konca 19. stoletja do druge svetovne vojne* (Ljubljana: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2022). Marko Zajc, "ORJUNA in PAČ na poti v Trbovlje: K zgodovini fizičnega nasilja v političnem boju," *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 54, no. 2 (2014): 101–23. Marko Zajc, "Odnos vojske Kraljevine SHS/Jugoslavije do Slovencev," *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 55, no. 1 (2015): 7–21.

29 Andrej Rahten, *V prah strti prestol: Slovensko dojemanje habsburške dinastije v postimperialni dobi* (Celje: Društvo Mohorjeva družba – Celjska Mohorjeva družba, 2023). Andrej Rahten, *Anton Korošec: Slovenski državnik kraljeve Jugoslavije* (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 2022). Mateja Ratej, *Triumfator: Anton Korošec v prvi Jugoslaviji* (Ljubljana: Beletrina, 2022).

30 Egon Pelikan, *Tone Kralj in prostor meje* (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 2016). Borut Klabjan and Gorazd Bajc, *Ogenj, ki je zajel Evropo: Narodni dom v Trstu 1920–2020* (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 2021).

Mapping the Field: A Historiography of Slovenian Political Thought

In the period of socialist Yugoslavia (1945–1991), Slovenian historiography laid the foundations for the study of Slovenian political and social history both in a positivist manner and from the perspective of studying structures and using comparative methods.[31] Even though historians did, to an extent, also write the history of political thought in this framework, they did not frame this accordingly, and did not call it "the history of political thought." On the other hand, what was called the history of Slovenian political thought was established at the intersection of the humanities and the social sciences, between historical studies and political science. In this section, we offer an overview of the field of the history of political thought in Slovenian historiography. Secondly, we argue that this field developed in close entanglement with the development of Slovenian statehood and the Slovenian national question, and that the Slovenian national question has been and remains the central concern of this historiography.

After the Second World War, the founders of modern Slovenian national historiography at the Department of History of the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana wrote about political thought and ideas but did not establish a specific paradigm for the history of Slovenian political thought. Bogo Grafenauer (1916–1995), for instance, focused primarily on questions of structural change and national development through the lens of historical materialism and class struggle. While political thought was not central to his work, Grafenauer still constructed a traditional Slovenian national narrative grounded in both positivist and Marxist historiography, along with the long-standing theme of Slovenian "servitude." Grafenauer defined the historical Slovenians in the pre-national era as Slavs by origin, peasants by class affiliation, and people who spoke the Slovenian language.[32] In this way, he defined Slovenians—regardless of their self-identification and lack of a glorious history—as a collective historical actor that developed into the Slovenian nation in parallel with the development of capitalism. Fran Zwitter (1905–1988) occasionally dealt with questions of political ideas and wrote about Illyrianism and Yugoslavism.[33] Zwitter's successor, Peter Vodopivec (b. 1946), contributed significantly to the history of political ideas with his conceptual breadth, but instead of approaching Slovenian history through political thought, he preferred

31 Bogo Grafenauer, *Struktura in tehnika zgodovinske vede: Uvod v študij zgodovine* (Ljubljana: Filozofska fakulteta, 1980).

32 Jernej Kosi, "Nacionalno zgodovinopisje kot orožje ljudstva: Grafenauerjeva koncepcija slovenske zgodovine," *O mojstrih in muzi: Zgodovinopisje Boga Grafenauerja in Ferda Gestrina*, eds. Peter Štih and Žiga Zwitter (Ljubljana: Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti, 2018), 60–84.

33 Fran Zwitter, *O slovenskem narodnem vprašanju*, ed. Vasilij Melik (Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 1990).

to study mentalities and economic and social views, more characteristic of the *Annales* school.[34]

Among the historians of the generation that came of age during the Second World War, Janko Pleterski (1923–2018), who was active in the socio-political landscape of socialist Yugoslavia, was the most concerned with ideological issues. His book *Narodi, Jugoslavija, revolucija* (1985), which at the time represented also a proposal for resolving the post-Tito crisis of Yugoslavism, remains a key text in the history of Yugoslav political thought. Pleterski came to a simple conclusion that was consistent with Edvard Kardelj's (1910–1979) theses on the national question in Yugoslavia: according to Pleterski, Yugoslavia is only possible if the Yugoslav nations (and nationalities) are fully acknowledged—as they were, according to the Constitution—and the socialist revolution continues. Nations, Yugoslavism, and revolution were, to Pleterski, the three elements of the Yugoslav "trinomial." If one collapsed, Yugoslavia would also collapse.[35] Pleterski was both an academic and an activist in the League of Communists; in other words, a historian and a creator of political thought at the same time. This dual role was particularly characteristic of historians of political thought and practice in the communist movement. They were often communist activists themselves in the period before the Second World War: for example, Dušan Kermavner (1903–1975) and France Klopčič (1903–1986), both members of the first generation of Slovenian communists, were known for their sharp public polemics on the history of the labor movement.[36]

In socialist Slovenia, the political and cultural establishment assigned nation-building primacy to fields other than history. That role traditionally fell to Slovenian language studies and comparative literature. Within this arena, alongside the official ideological line, alternative visions of Slovenia's past and future also emerged. In Slovenia, alongside existentialism, the critical generation turned to phenomenology—above all Heidegger—whose influence proved decisive for Dušan Pirjevec (1921–1977), a philosopher and comparativist navigating between regime loyalty and dissent. Combining phenomenology, Kardelj's Marxism, theories of nationalism (Hans Kohn, Hannah Arendt, Hannah Vogt), and a distinctive rereading of the Slovenian canon, Pirjevec provided the critical generation and cultural nonconformists an alternative framework to articulate a critique of the state socialist cultural-political reality. For Pirjevec, the modern

34 Peter Vodopivec, *O gospodarskih in socialnih nazorih na Slovenskem v 19. stoletju* (Ljubljana: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2006).

35 Janko Pleterski, *Narodi, Jugoslavija, revolucija* (Ljubljana: Komunist–Državna založba Slovenije, 1986).

36 Dušan Kermavner, *Ivan Cankar in slovenska politika leta 1918* (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1968). France Klopčič, *Neravnodušni državljan: Razčlembe in zamisli* (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1974).

nation appears on two levels: as a nexus of the ethnic—hence a linguistic-cultural community—and as an organized community defined by power, rationalization, and governance.[37] Pirjevec defines the nation as a large group, "a movement" that strives for statehood and actively pursues it. The Slovenian nation never became a genuine "movement," Pirjevec claimed, since foreign predominance kept it inhibited or blocked. He identified a transgenerational characteristic of Slovenian literature and politics, which he called the "Prešeren structure." In this model, Slovenian literature—with poet France Prešeren (1800–1849) as its canonical center—assumed the leading role in national self-affirmation and legitimation during a period without statehood. Within this framework, literature functions not merely aesthetically, but also as the community's symbolic and normative horizon, substituting absent political institutions.[38] After Pirjevec's death in 1977, this trajectory was carried forward by a dissident group of intellectuals that, in the 1980s, became known as the *Nova revija* circle: Tine Hribar, Ivo Urbančič, Dimitrij Rupel, and Niko Grafenauer.[39] In the late 1980s, this circle—drawing on reinterpretations of Pirjevec's theses—formulated an alternative Slovenian national program, regarded in the Slovenian contemporary national narrative as a pivotal text for independence and democratization.[40] Pirjevec's conceptual framework had remarkably little exchange with those of historians and political scientists, a gap that warrants closer scholarly scrutiny.

More than with the Department of History at the Faculty of Arts, the history of political thought was rather linked closely to the study of political science at the Faculty of Sociology, Political Science, and Journalism (now the Faculty of Social Sciences) in Ljubljana. Namely, the founder of political science in Slovenia, Adolf Bibič (1933–1996), introduced the basic subject "History of Political Ideas" into the study of political science.[41] In 1976, Bibič invited Janko Prunk (b. 1941), a historian from the Institute for the History of the Labor Movement (*Inštitut za zgodovino delavskega gibanja*, now the Institute of Contemporary History), to

37 Dušan Pirjevec, *Vprašanje o poeziji, vprašanje naroda* (Maribor: Obzorja, 1978), 132. See Balázs Trencsényi, Michal Kopeček, Luka Lisjak Gabrijelčič, Maria Falina, Mónika Baár, and Maciej Janowski, *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe*, vol. 2, *Negotiating Modernity in the Short Twentieth Century and Beyond*, Part 2, *1918–1968* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 127.

38 Marijan Dović, *Prešeren po Prešernu: Kanonizacija nacionalnega pesnika in kulturnega svetnika* (Ljubljana: Literarno-umetniško društvo Literatura, 2017), 204.

39 Marko Juvan, "Slovenski kulturni sindrom v nacionalni in primerjalni literarni vedi," *Slavistična revija* 56, no. 1 (2008): 1–17.

40 Marko Zajc, "The *Nova revija* Magazine's 1986 Survey on the Yugoslav Crisis," in *East Central European Crisis Discourses in the Twentieth Century: A Never-Ending Story?*, ed. Balázs Trencsényi, Lucija Balikić, Una Blagojević, and Isidora Grubački (New York: Routledge, 2025), 294–316.

41 Igor Lukšič, "Politologija v Republiki Sloveniji: 60 let institucionalizacije," *Teorija in praksa* 59, no. 1 (2022): 215.

join the faculty, where he lectured on general history and the history of political thought for the next few decades.[42] Other collaborators at this institute also became increasingly involved in the field of the history of political thought, although they did not define their work as such. Franc Rozman (b. 1941) wrote about the political views of the labor movement in the Habsburg period,[43] Vida Deželak Barič (b. 1954) studied not only the organizational history of the communist movement but also its views,[44] while Jurij Perovšek (b. 1954) established himself as a leading expert on the political thought of Slovenian liberalism and on the national question between the two wars.[45] Perovšek's conceptual approach was closest to that of Janko Prunk. In fact, both furthered their studies at the Leibniz Institute of European History in Mainz, where they became acquainted with the German historiographic tradition of the history of political ideas.[46]

Janko Prunk can be defined as the central figure in shaping the paradigm of Slovenian political thought during the transition from socialism. He is also important for this reader because his research focused primarily on the interwar period. His book on Christian socialists is considered a standard work of Slovenian political thought.[47] Since the early 1980s, he has written several articles on political thought, including on Kardelj and one of the key politicians and thinkers of the interwar period, the Catholic conservative Anton Korošec (1872–1940). In 1986, he published a book on Slovenian national programs,[48] and his view of the history of Slovenian political thought matured in parallel with the transition to parliamentary democracy and independence. In 1992, his best-known work, *Slovenski narodni vzpon* (Slovenian National Ascension), was published, in which he analyzed Slovenian political thought and national politics between 1768 and 1992.[49] It is interesting to note that the book was published at a time when Prunk was actively involved in national politics: in 1992–93, he was Minister for Slovenians Abroad and National Minorities in Slovenia in the first coalition government of Janez Drnovšek.

42 Janko Prunk, "Zgodovina slovenske politične misli," *Teorija in praksa* 59, no. 1 (2022): 365–77, especially 375.

43 Franc Rozman, *Socialistično delavsko gibanje na slovenskem Štajerskem* (Ljubljana: Založba Borec, 1979).

44 Vida Deželak-Barič, "Razvoj Komunistične partije Slovenije na Štajerskem v letih 1941–1943 s stališča njene organiziranosti," *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 27, no. 1–2 (1987): 105–32.

45 Jurij Perovšek, *Programi političnih strank, organizacij in združenj na Slovenskem v času Kraljevine SHS (1918–1929)* (Ljubljana: Arhivsko društvo Slovenije, 1998).

46 Jure Gašparič and Andreas Schulz, "Jurij Perovšek – Sedemdesetletnik; Deutsch-Slowenische Begegnungen," *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 64, no. 2 (2024): 317–23.

47 Prunk, *Pot krščanskih socialistov.*

48 Janko Prunk, *Slovenski narodni programi: Narodni programi v slovenski politični misli od 1848 do 1945* (Ljubljana: Društvo 2000, 1986).

49 Janko Prunk, *Slovenski narodni vzpon: narodna politika (1768–1992)* (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1992).

According to Prunk, a distinctive feature of Slovenian political thought is that it always emphasizes the relationship with the nation. Slovenian political thought talks about the nation more than is customary among large nations, which do not even think about the dilemmas of their existence, which is not unusual, Prunk argued, since the Slovenian nation developed without its own state. Prunk (like his historical contemporaries) did not discuss how the Slovenian nation came into being, but described it as a "lively, vital, and sensitive creation"[50] that always responded to opportunities for development before reaching a new level of national self-awareness at the end of the 1980s, which recognized the necessity of having its own state. After independence in 1991, a new national consciousness emerged which, as Prunk suggested, would be able to assign the nation to its rightful place in the post-industrial world. Prunk sought to answer the fundamental question "Why did we Slovenians decide the way we did at certain historical turning points and not differently?"[51] Having been interested in the rise of Slovenian politics from its early beginnings to the establishment of an independent state, the author looked to the history of political thought as a means to capture continuity, particularly the tendencies toward political autonomy and independence. Overall, even though Prunk is not a complete determinist and presents different concepts that opposed Slovenian individuality / autonomy / statehood, in his historical narrative he took a value-laden stance toward the actions of historical actors. Specifically, he declared utopian both the idea of a unified Yugoslav state between the two wars and the belief in a Yugoslav federation as a necessary framework for Slovenian political unity, which was established during socialist Yugoslavia.

The book created a significant stir in the historical community. Peter Vodopivec published a harsh review of the book in the leading Slovenian newspaper *Delo*. Vodopivec, who had studied in Paris in the late 1970s and promoted the history of mentalities, new socio-historical approaches, and research into everyday life, accused Prunk of an outdated approach, factual errors, superficiality, and a focus solely on national political issues. Above all, he was bothered by Prunk's generalized statements about historical Slovenians.[52] Vodopivec's colleagues from the Faculty of Arts, Janez Cvirn and Igor Grdina, joined the criticism of Prunk's book in *Delo*. In addition to the narrow selection of literature and factual errors, Cvirn mainly criticized the repetition of stereotypical views introduced into Slovenian history by Edvard Kardelj, as well as historical determinism.[53] Grdina

50 Ibid., 11.
51 Ibid., 12.
52 Peter Vodopivec, "Zamujena priložnost. Kako je obravnavana tema, ki je 'že dolgo vabila pisca'," *Delo* 35, no. 51, March 4, 1993, 14.
53 Janez Cvirn, "Prunkov slovenski narodni vzpon – v monografiji," *Delo* 35, no. 63, March 18, 1993, 14.

attacked Prunk with a sarcastic list of political actors and events that Prunk had not mentioned.[54]

Prunk responded to criticism with a call for honesty in scientific debate, while at the same time indignantly challenging Vodopivec to try similar work himself.[55] He also responded in a paternalistic tone to his younger colleagues, asserting that he was familiar with philosophical views critical of progress, but nevertheless believed that, despite fluctuations, Slovenian national development had been a steady rise, culminating in the establishment of its own nation-state.[56] Janko Pleterski came to Prunk's defense in the debate, emphasizing that Prunk's book was based on "today's experience, which shows that the process of emancipation of the Slovenian nation is a special feature of its history that is also important for others."[57]

As Tjaša Konovšek notes in a recent article on the normativity of nationhood in post-1989 Slovenian historiography, this debate was not just about ideological differences or personal conflicts, but about much more: a disagreement about the nature of history and how it relates to the present. Roughly speaking, two views of Slovenian history emerged. Prunk and Pleterski shared the opinion that the nation is connected to its past experience, and therefore it is necessary to rewrite the history of the nation in independent Slovenia. Both were convinced that the nation had proven to be the central concept around which historical development revolves. By contrast, Vodopivec, Cvirn, and Grdina defended an understanding of the nation in connection with the newly formed Slovenian state as a radical and unexpected episode in the political development of the wider Slovenian space, which was by no means a historical necessity, but rather a break with the traditional political views of the past. While the first understanding was based primarily on the past, the second accepted the new environment of the Slovenian nation-state as an unpredictable and unknown fact that was primarily a matter of the future rather than the past.[58]

Although, as Tjaša Konovšek notes, both views of Slovenian history found their way into encyclopedic reviews and curricula, we can observe that the study of political thought in Slovenian historiography became decidedly unpopular after the aforementioned debate. While many historians in the 1990s and early 2000s dealt with political thought—for example Ervin Dolenc, Egon Pelikan,

54 Igor Grdina, "Čez teden dni bo g. dr. Prunku morda spet treba odgovoriti. I," *Delo* 35, no. 75, April 1, 1993, 14.

55 Janko Prunk, "Za poštenost v znanstvenem razpravljanju," *Delo* 35, no. 57, March 11, 1993, 14.

56 Janko Prunk, "Ta teden mi je odgovoriti gospodu Janezu Cvirnu," *Delo* 35, no. 96, March 25, 1993, 14.

57 Janko Pleterski, "Po burji še beseda, izrečena že ob predstavitvi knjige," *Delo* 35, no. 126, June 3, 1993, 6.

58 Tjaša Konovšek, "The Normativity of a Nation: A Case Study of Slovene Historians in Early Post-Socialism," *Forum Historiae* 16, no. 1 (2022): 137.

Bojan Godeša, Janez Cvirn, Igor Grdina, Jože Pirjevec, to name but a few—they did not, as a rule, define their research work as "the history of political thought."[59] They rather placed their research in the field of political or cultural history, using terms such as "views," "concepts," and "ideology" instead of "political thought." On the other hand, as noted, the study of political thought developed primarily in the Department of Political Science at the Faculty of Social Sciences, where Janko Prunk lectured. In this academic environment, the history of political thought was intertwined with political theory and philosophy, as well as with more quantitative approaches.

Prunk's colleagues at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Igor Lukšič and Jernej Pikalo, also dealt with the history political thought. Both were politically active as social democrats and held ministerial positions.[60] They attempted to weave Slovenian political thought into the international paradigm of the study of political ideas. Lukšič, for example, acknowledges that the history of political ideas can be presented as national histories, that this approach has its advantages, but is ultimately convinced that the history of political ideas cannot be merely the sum of national political histories.[61] In his book *Med hlapci in revolucionarji* (Between Servants and Revolutionaries, 2019), Lukšič emphasized that political ideas in Slovenia developed through historical struggles for political subjectivity, with a crucial role played by the tension between two opposing poles: servility (*hlapčevstvo*) toward existing authorities and radical revolutionary movements that sought to abolish the established order entirely. Lukšič demonstrates that Slovenian political thought did not merely absorb foreign ideas, but rather selectively translated, adapted, and embedded them into its own historical experience, particularly through the Catholic, liberal, and Marxist traditions.[62]

59 The approach of the historians in question to political thought as an area of study would certainly merit separate consideration. They have undoubtedly made significant contributions to the study of the history of Slovenian political thought, even if they did not describe their work in those terms. Ervin Dolenc and Igor Grdina, for example, position themselves within the field of cultural history; Bojan Godeša is drawn to the history of ideas; Janez Cvirn skillfully intertwined political ideas, political practice, and everyday life in his writings; Egon Pelikan is distinguished by his analysis of ideology through debates among intellectuals within the public sphere and in visual art; while Jože Pirjevec, in numerous works, persistently situated the Upper Adriatic and Trieste within the framework of Slovenian national history.

60 Igor Lukšič was Minister of Education and Sport between 2008 and 2012. Jernej Pikalo was Minister of Education, Science, and Sport between 2013 and 2014 and between 2018 and 2020. The Social Democrats (SD) party is the successor to the League of Communists of Slovenia (*Zveze komunistov Slovenije*, ZKS), which was renamed to ZKS – Party of Democratic Renewal (ZKS–SDP) in 1990. In 1993, it merged with smaller left-wing parties to form the United List of Social Democrats. In 2005, it adopted the name Social Democrats. It operates within the framework of the European Party of Socialists (PES).

61 Igor Lukšič and Jernej Pikalo, *Uvod v zgodovino političnih idej* (Ljubljana: Sophia, 2007).

62 Igor Lukšič, *Med hlapci in revolucionarji. Nastanek političnih doktrin na Slovenskem* (Ljubljana: Modrijan, 2019).

Another representative of this tradition is Milan Zver, who worked as an assistant at the Department of Political Science between 1987 and 1992. In the early 1990s, Zver devoted himself to professional politics in the Social Democratic Party of Slovenia (today, the Slovenian Democratic Party, SDS),[63] although he continued his academic work and obtained his doctorate in 1998 under the mentorship of Janko Prunk. Like Lukšič and Pikalo, Zver also gained experience in a ministerial position.[64] In the 1990s, he attempted to profile himself as the ideologue of the then Social Democratic Party with his book *100 let socialdemokracije* (100 Years of Social Democracy, 1996).[65] In the book, he presented a historical narrative according to which there is a connection in political practice and thought between the social democratic party of the early twentieth century and his party at the end of the twentieth century. Zver historically justified his party's anti-communism by defending Bernstein's revisionism as the correct direction, in contrast to Karl Kautsky and later communists.[66] In 2002, Zver published a thorough analysis of Slovenian political thought in his book *Demokracija v klasični slovenski politični misli* (Democracy in Classical Slovenian Political Thought). He defined this classicism not only in terms of time, but also normatively. He did not include communist and pro-fascist movements in his analysis because, in his words, they cannot be included within the so-called democratic horizon.[67] Thus, Zver's history of political thought can be read as part of the post-socialist trajectory of Slovenian political parties. His own party began as an anti-communist social democratic formation, then shifting to a center-right party, then moving further to the right. Parallel to these processes, Zver turned his gaze from social democracy to classical democracy. The year of publication is telling too, published when the party was rapidly distancing itself from the social democratic label.[68]

Overall, this section has shown that, after Second World War, Slovenian historiography did not develop a paradigm for the history of political thought; the

63 The political party was part of the anti-communist DEMOS coalition that ruled Slovenia during its independence. Originally founded in 1989 as the Social Democratic Union of Slovenia (*Socialdemokratska zveza Slovenije*, SDZS), it was renamed the Social Democratic Party of Slovenia (*Socialdemokratska stranka Slovenije*, SDSS) in the lead-up to the April 1990 elections, the first multiparty elections in Slovenia after the Second World War. In its early years, SDSS modeled itself on the German and Austrian social democratic parties. After 1993, when Janez Janša took over the party leadership, the SDSS shifted rightward. In 2003 the party was renamed the Slovenian Democratic Party (*Slovenska demokratska stranka*, SDS) and became the strongest force on the political right in Slovenia. It has increasingly adopted populist and far-right rhetoric over the past twenty years, although it still remains within the framework of the European People's Party.

64 Milan Zver was Minister of Education and Sport from 2004 to 2008.

65 Milan Zver, *100 let socialdemokracije* (Ljubljana: Veda, 1996).

66 Jurij Hadalin, "Kaj bi rekel Henrik Tuma? Od Socialdemokratske stranke Slovenije do Slovenske demokratske stranke," *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 61, no. 3 (2021): 244.

67 Milan Zver, *Demokracija v klasični slovenski politični misli* (Ljubljana: Orbis, 2002), 11.

68 Hadalin, "Kaj bi rekel Henrik Tuma," 256.

concept was rather developed by political scientists, with the exception of historian Janko Prunk, who was embedded at the Faculty of Social Sciences and collaborated closely with his colleagues there. The history of political thought was most relevant immediately after independence, when Prunk's book *Slovenski narodni vzpon* sparked an extensive public debate. This debate clarified two views of the Slovenian historical narrative. The label "political thought" was linked narrowly to Prunk's perception of Slovenian history; with few exceptions (e.g., the work of Jurij Perovšek), "political thought" did not play a significant role in post-socialist Slovenian historiography. It is furthermore particularly noteworthy that writings on the history of Slovenian political thought were mainly undertaken by academics and political scientists who themselves were actively involved in politics: Prunk, Lukšič, Pikalo, and Zver. It also seems that the history of political thought was primarily a male domain with rare exceptions, such as Cirila Toplak,[69] who collaborated with Prunk but developed her own orientations and approaches. In 2023, Prunk published his *Zgodovina slovenske politične misli* (History of Slovenian Political Thought), in which he rounded off and supplemented his research into the subject. Regardless of the author's focus on the Slovenian national question and statehood, as well as his continued penchant for deterministic and value-laden judgements, this monograph can nevertheless be defined as the only historical overview of Slovenian political thought so far.[70]

The question arises as to why the history of political thought has not left a greater mark on Slovenian historiography. One reason is certainly that the intellectual climate of socialist society was not conducive to this approach. Another reason could be found in the fate of a "small nation" that was not bound by historical rights but by natural law discourses and ethnolinguistic conceptions of the nation. A third reason could be linked to the political thought of socialist Yugoslavia and Slovenia, which, as already mentioned, was largely shaped by Edvard Kardelj; more than a high-ranking official and architect of Yugoslav self-management, Kardelj was also the ideologist of socialist Slovenianism and socialist Slovenian statehood.[71] Both above-mentioned streams in Slovenian historiography were in dialogue with the previous era, symbolized by Edvard Kardelj and

69 Cirila Toplak, *Kdo smo mi brez drugih?: Slovenstvo* (Ljubljana: Fakulteta za družbene vede, Založba FDV, 2014).

70 Janko Prunk, *Zgodovina slovenske politične misli* (Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 2023).

71 Most notably Edvard Kardelj, *Razvoj slovenskega narodnega vprašanja* (Ljubljana: Naša založba, 1939), which was republished four more times: 1957, 1970, 1977, and posthumously in 1980. On the fourth occasion, a separate volume on Kardelj's role in Slovenian historiography was organized and published by the Historical Society for Slovenia (*Zgodovinsko društvo za Slovenijo*). See Vasilij Melik, Janez Stergar, and Miroslav Stiplovšek, eds., *Edvard Kardelj – Sperans in slovensko zgodovinopisje* (Ljubljana: Zgodovinsko društvo za Slovenijo, 1980). The volume included contributions from Janko Pleterski, Ignacij Voje, Metod Mikuž, France Filipič, Bogo Grafenauer, Miroslav Stiplovšek, and Branko Marušič.

his conception of the Slovenian nation and so Slovenian national history. While Prunk skillfully wove Kardelj's interpretation into a deterministic picture of the rise of the Slovenian nation and gave the process new meaning (defining it as an important step on the pre-determined path to Slovenian statehood), other historians rejected Kardelj's concepts as outdated and irrelevant.

The Canon of Slovenian Political Thought and the Theory of Political Camps

In the history of political thought, the canon refers to a recognized body of texts, authors, and ideas considered foundational or exemplary for understanding politics, power, justice, and governance. These works are typically seen as shaping key debates and frameworks within a tradition of political theory.[72] In examining the Slovenian canon of political thought, it is useful to situate the discussion within broader contemporary historiographic efforts to renegotiate the relationship between local and pan-European intellectual traditions, such as *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe*.[73] As highlighted by the authors of that volume, the task of canon-formation is never neutral; it often involves retrospective construction, whereby texts from different periods are often read through a teleological lens that seeks to establish an unbroken line toward modern national consciousness.[74] In the Slovenian case, too, the intellectual traditions of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are frequently framed as anticipations of later ideological formations, with the primary focus on the national question and often within the three-camp model. Engaging with the theory of political camps ("*Lagertheorie*"), this section contributes to the kind of "entangled history" that Trencsényi and his collaborators have advocated—one that goes beyond merely expanding the pool of shared references to examine critically the categories through which political modernity has been understood.[75] However, our approach here diverges from that of *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe*. While those volumes primarily examine region-specific ideological cultures and subcultures and their evolving relationship with

72 Jeanette Ehrmann, "Within, beyond or against the Canon: What Does It Mean to Decolonize Social and Political Theory?," *Journal of Classical Sociology* 22, no. 4 (2022): 388–95.

73 Balázs Trencsényi, Maciej Janowski, Mónika Baár, Maria Falina, and Michal Kopeček, *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe*, vol. 1, *Negotiating Modernity in the 'Long Nineteenth Century'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). Balázs Trencsényi, Michal Kopeček, Luka Lisjak Gabrijelčic, Maria Falina, Mónika Baár, and Maciej Janowski, *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe*, vol. 2, *Negotiating Modernity in the 'Short Twentieth Century' and Beyond*, Part 1: *1918–1968* and Part 2: *1968–2018* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

74 Trencsényi et al., *A History of Modern Political Thought*, vol. 1, 8–9.

75 Ibid., 1–3.

broader European (both Western and non-Western) intellectual trends, our focus returns to the question of the national canon. We discuss in this section the national Slovenian political canon based on their presence in Slovenian historiography and school history.[76] More broadly, through this reader, we aim to expand the Slovenian political canon by including a wider range of thinkers and themes—thus also contributing to and diversifying the broader transnational conversation.

The *Lagertheorie* was developed in the 1950s by historian Adam Wandruszka to analyze the political system of the First Austrian Republic. According to his theory, political camps in Austria were separated not only politically, but also ideologically, socially, and culturally. Wandruszka showed that the division began in the nineteenth century with the split between liberals and conservatives, emphasizing the role of confessional differences—Catholic conservative circles on the one hand and liberal, secular circles on the other. In the late nineteenth century, the socialist camp emerged, transforming the binary structure of the political space into a tripartite one. After the collapse of Austria-Hungary, the political camps became further institutionalized. Three distinct camps emerged in Austria: the Christian social-conservative camp around the Christian Social Party (*Christlichsoziale Partei*, the predecessor of today's Austrian People's Party, the *Österreichische Volkspartei*); the socialist camp around the Social Democratic Worker's Party of Austria (*Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei Österreichs*, the predecessor of today's Socialist Party of Austria, the *Sozialistische Partei Österreichs*); and the national camp around the Greater German People's Party (*Großdeutsche Volkspartei*, the predecessor of today's Freedom Party of Austria, the *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs*). These camps dominated not only parliamentary politics, but also trade unions, the media, cultural organizations, and education, creating a strong camp-based political culture in which voters remained loyal to their group for generations.[77]

The term "camp" is used here to refer to movements, parties, and groups. It also points toward the militancy of the political parties and their social peripheries as well as their mutual intransigence.[78] After 1945, the division of Austrian

76 Due to space limitations, not all significant figures and works could be included, and we acknowledge that alternative selections are possible.

77 Adam Wandruszka, *Österreichs politische Struktur. Die Entwicklung der Parteien und politischen Bewegungen* (Vienna: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 1954). See also Lothar Höbelt, "Adam Wandruszka und die 'gottgewollten drei Lager'," *Annali dell'Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento* 33 (2007): 253–65. Oskar Mulej, "Stanje in notranja razmerja v slovenskem naprednem (liberalnem) taboru na pragu 2. svetovne vojne," *Dileme: Razprave o vprašanjih sodobne slovenske zgodovine* 7, no. 2 (2023): 43.

78 Margareta Mommsen-Reindl, "Österreich," in *Lexikon zur Geschichte der Parteien in Europa*, ed. Frank Wende (Stuttgart: Kröner, 1981), 443.

politics into camps continued, although the parties also developed mechanisms for cooperation, which ensured political stability (the so-called *Proporz*).[79] The theory of political camps experienced a renaissance of sorts in the 1980s, when the German Christian democratic politician Heiner Geißler developed his own theory of camps, intended to redefine the four-party system in West Germany after the Greens entered parliament in 1983. Geißler divided the political arena into two camps: the "bourgeois" camp (*Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands / Christlich-Soziale Union* and *Freie Demokratische Partei*) and the "left" camp (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands* and *Die Grünen*). In his opinion, the key to political success was to secure a majority within one's own camp, as winning votes at the expense of allies within the camp would only result in a zero-sum game.[80]

The Slovenian use of the concept is closer to the Austrian than the German version. As in the Austrian case, the Slovenian political field evolved into tripartite structure. Likewise, both Slovenian and Austrian historiography consider the term unsuitable for describing the political situation in the first half of the nineteenth century. As expected, canonical status in Slovenian historiography was earned primarily through discussion on the national question. The poetry of France Prešeren, in which Slovenian and general Slavic sentiments intertwine with Romanticism, became part of the Slovenian political canon due to its rejection of Illyrianism as well as its advocacy of Slovenian linguistic individuality.[81] The Revolutions of 1848 brought forth the United Slovenia program (*Zedinjena Slovenija*): a demand for the unification of the "Slovenian lands" into a single kingdom within Austria, which placed the main author of the program, the liberal Carinthian priest Matija Majar (1809–1892), among the important canonical writers.[82] From this moment onwards, Slovenian political history has assessed political processes through the prism of the implementation of this founding national program. Despite the intense political activity during the years 1848/49, Slovenian historiography does not refer to this period using the term "political camp."

Slovenian historians adopted the phrase "political camp" to characterize the political landscape of the post-1867 constitutional period, when parties did not yet exist in the sense of mass-structured organizations. For the period of early

79 "Proporzsystem in der Krise," Parlament Österreich, https://www.parlament.gv.at/verstehen/historisches/1945-1995/proporzsystem-krise, last accessed October 10, 2025.

80 "Heiner Geißler," Geschichte der CDU, Konrad Andenauer Stiftung, https://www.kas.de/de/web/geschichte-der-cdu/personen/biogramm-detail/-/content/heiner-geissler, last accessed October 10, 2025.

81 Illyrianism was a cultural and political movement of South Slavic intellectuals in the first half of the nineteenth century centered on the idea of the linguistic and national unity of the South Slavs as Illyrians. See Peter Vodopivec, *Od Pohlinove slovnice do samostojne države: Slovenska zgodovina od konca 18. stoletja do konca 20. stoletja* (Ljubljana: Modrijan, 2006), 48.

82 See, e.g., Vasilij Melik, "Majarjeva peticija za zedinjeno Slovenijo 1848," *Časopis za zgodovino in narodopisje* 15, no. 1–2 (1979): 286–94.

parliamentarism, they identified only a "Slovenian political camp" which was supposed to be in opposition to the "German camp."[83] In doing so, historians have often followed the language of the sources; the word 'camp' was popular during the period of Habsburg parliamentarianism, especially in moments of heated political struggle, as it implied the combative metaphor of a military camp. The use of the term is inconsistent, however. The disputes between the liberal "Young Slovenes" and the conservative "Old Slovenes" in the 1870s are sometimes seen as internal divisions within a single Slovenian camp, and at other times as a clash between two separate Slovenian camps.

When it comes to thinkers from the second half of the nineteenth century, we can notice a process of canonization of writers and literary figures rather than political actors. Namely, Slovenian historians did not identify Janez Bleiweis (1808–1881) as a political thinker *per se*, but rather as a practitioner and leader of the conservative "Old Slovenes." On the other hand, the role of political thinker was often attributed to the "Young Slovene" Fran Levstik (1831–1887), a writer and journalist who had no party-political influence but was known for his sharp texts in defense of Slovenian national and linguistic rights. Josip Jurčič (1844–1881), the author of the first Slovenian novel and editor of the core liberal newspaper *Slovenski narod* from 1872 to 1881, was likewise considered a political thinker, though his ideas about the integration of Slovenians into the Croatian-Serbian language community were overlooked, or rather ignored.[84]

In the 1890s, with the emergence of what Carl Schorske famously called "politics in a new key,"[85] a period of differentiation and organization of Slovenian political groups began—a period that Slovenian historiography also refers to as the formation of political camps.[86] The first political thinker to emerge in the Catholic camp was Anton Mahnič (1850–1920), a clergyman from Gorizia with a fierce agenda against modern society and a penchant for ideas of re-Catholicization. Slovenian historians likewise pay a lot of attention to Janez Evangelist Krek (1865–1917), who they describe as a Christian socialist theorist and practitioner,[87] while Anton Ušeničnik (1868–1952), the founder of Slovenian Catholic sociology, also played an important role as a thinker.[88] On the liberal side, the writer and leader of the liberal party in Carniola, Ivan Tavčar (1851–1923), is occasionally

83 Vasilij Melik, *Slovenci 1848–1918: Razprave in članki*, ed. Viktor Vrbnjak (Maribor: Litera, 2002), 324.
84 Ivan Prijatelj, *Slovenska kulurnopolitična in slovstvena zgodovina*, vol. 5, *1848–1895* (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1966).
85 Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980).
86 Prunk, *Slovenski narodni vzpon*, 105. Vodopivec, *Od Pohlinove slovnice do samostojne države*, 111.
87 Edo Škulj, ed., *Krekov simpozij v Rimu* (Ljubljana: Mohorjeva družba, 1992). Egon Pelikan, "Janez Evangelist Krek: Modernizator katoliškega gibanja na Slovenskem," in *Janez Evangelist Krek - sto let pozneje (1917–2017)*, ed. Matjaž Ambrožič (Ljubljana: Teološka fakulteta, 2018), 137–48.
88 Prunk, *Zgodovina slovenske politične misli*, 73.

considered a political thinker, but usually in the context of the cultural struggle with the Catholic camp,[89] whereas historians have characterized Ivan Hribar (1851–1941) almost only as a pragmatic mayor and economist, even though he contributed to the political thought behind neo-Slavism.[90] One of the important issues that shook Slovenian politics in the last two decades of the Habsburg Empire was the relationship between Slovenians and the rest of the South Slavs. Although this issue preoccupied all three camps, it was particularly significant in the liberal intellectual scene. The "third generation of liberals," as Janko Prunk calls them, emphasized anti-Catholicism and Yugoslav unitarianism. Among them were intellectuals such as Bogomil Vošnjak and Albin Ogris, as well as politicians who took over the liberal camp after 1918 (notably Gregor Žerjav and Albert Kramer).[91]

Falling slightly out of the "camp" logic, Slovenian historiography also identifies a small yet intellectually influential group of canonical authors as followers of Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, including the historian Dragotin Lončar (1876–1954) and the lawyer Anton Dermota (1876–1914).[92] These thinkers sought to address the Slovenian national question by advocating for national-cultural autonomy and connecting it to Yugoslavism as a union of distinct nations. After 1902, both aligned more closely with the social democratic camp, while the psychologist and publicist Mihajlo Rostohar (1878–1966) embraced rather the liberal political option, despite continuing to advocate for Slovenian national individuality.[93] Among the social democrats, we find various canonical writers; Slovenian historiography often cites the writer and playwright Ivan Cankar as a political thinker, especially his ideas about the relationship between Slovenians and other South Slavic nations. The following lines from his 1913 lecture "Slovenians and Yugoslavs" rank among the most famous quotes in Slovenian political history:

> By blood we are brothers, by language at least cousins, but by culture—which is the fruit of centuries of separate upbringing—we are much more foreign to each other than a farmer from Upper Carniola is to one from Tyrol, or a winegrower from Gorizia is to one from Friuli.[94]

89 Zvonko Bergant, "Politični portret Ivana Tavčarja v letih 1894–1918," in *Melikov zbornik: Slovenci v zgodovini in njihovi srednjeevropski sosedje*, ed. Vincenc Rajšp et al. (Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, ZRC SAZU, 2001), 809–20.

90 Irena Gantar Godina, *Neoslavizem in Slovenci* (Ljubljana: Znanstveni inštitut Filozofske fakultete, 1994).

91 Prunk, *Zgodovina slovenske politične misli*, 92.

92 Irena Gantar Godina, *T. G. Masaryk in masarykovstvo na Slovenskem (1895–1914)* (Ljubljana: Slovenska matica, 1987). See also Perovšek, "Dragotin Lončar," in *Politika in moderna*, 205–21.

93 Prunk, *Zgodovina slovenske politične misli*, 89.

94 Ivan Cankar, "Slovenci in Jugoslovani," *Zarja* 3, no. 557, April 15, 1913, 1; no. 558, April 16, 1913, 1; republished in Ivan Cankar, *Izbrano delo*, vol. 1, ed. Josip Vidmar (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1976).

Cankar also developed the thesis of historical subjugation or "servitude" as a defining characteristic of the Slovenian nation, though this was already present in Slovenian political journalism in the late nineteenth century.[95]

The socialist leader and politician Etbin Kristan (1867–1953), present in this reader, earned himself a place in both Slovenian historiography and transnational historical studies due to his occasional advocacy of non-territorial autonomy.[96] Meanwhile, the distinguished lawyer from Gorizia, Henrik Tuma (1858–1935), who switched from the liberal to the socialist camp in 1908, earned his place in the Slovenian canon primarily by emphasizing the importance of Trieste for Slovenians and the Yugoslav peoples and warning against Italy as the greatest enemy.[97]

The most important political text from during the First World War was the May Declaration, which was read out in the *Reichsrat* in Vienna on May 30, 1917, by Anton Korošec, president of the Yugoslav Club and leader of the Slovenian People's Party. The declaration called for the unification of all Yugoslav territories within the Habsburg Empire on the basis of the national-cultural principle and Croatian state law.[98] Slovenian historiography also considers the newspaper debate between Fran Šuklje (1849–1935), representing the Catholic camp, and the liberal leaders Ivan Tavčar and Ivan Hribar in 1918 on the internal organization of the future Yugoslav state to be similarly important.[99]

Slovenian political writing between the two world wars produced a wealth of material, so we will focus on the most influential authors. In the socialist camp, which split into communist and social democratic factions, Dragotin Gustinčič (1882–1974) secured a place in the canon of Slovenian political thought by playing an important role in the debates over the national question within the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in 1923.[100] Among the younger generation of communists, Edvard Kardelj stood out with his book on the Slovenian national question, as did Boris Kidrič (1912–1953), who was interested in cultural issues.[101] Slovenian political thought during the socialist period was undoubtedly marked by the fact that the author of the most important text on the national question was also the most important theorist of Yugoslav socialist federalism: the influential

95 As represented in Ivan Cankar, *Hlapci: drama v petih aktih* (Ljubljana: L. Schwentner, 1910).

96 Börries Kuzmany, *Vom Umgang mit nationaler Vielfalt: Eine Geschichte der nicht-territorialen Autonomie in Europa* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2024), 51.

97 Janko Pleterski, *Študije o slovenski zgodovini in narodnem vprašanju* (Maribor: Obzorja, 1981), 94.

98 Vlasta Stavbar, *Majniška deklaracija in deklaracijsko gibanje: Slovenska politika v habsburški monarhiji, od volilne reforme do nove države (1906-1918)* (Maribor: Založba Pivec, 2017).

99 Perovšek, *Slovenska osamosvojitev v letu 1918*, 34–38.

100 Perovšek, *Samoodločba in federacija*, 72.

101 Janko Pleterski, "Zgodovinska misel slovenskih marksistov v času Speransove knjige," *Zgodovinski časopis* 33, no. 4 (1979): 533–44; published also in *Edvard Kardelj – Sperans in slovensko zgodovinopisje*, 5–16.

politician Edvard Kardelj. His work *Razvoj slovenskega narodnega vprašanja* (The Development of the Slovenian National Question; first published in 1939 and expanded in 1957) had the status of a canonical political text of the highest order in the socialist period (1945–1991).[102] Written in 1938, the central theme of the book is the connection between the struggle for Slovenian national liberation and the revolution. The Slovenian question, Kardelj argued, was not just a local issue, but a link in the chain of imperialist contradictions that intertwined the entire world. Kardelj was convinced that the leading role in the Slovenian national liberation movement must be taken by the "avant-garde of the working class."[103] This was conditioned by Slovenian history, which was "one long chain of oppression and the trampling of the small Slovenian nation."[104] In his book, Kardelj repeatedly used the idea of Slovenians as a "nation of proletarians,"[105] carrying on the ideas expressed in the literary works of Ivan Cankar before 1918.[106]

The most famous political debate among the liberal intelligentsia took place in 1932, when the young cultural figure Josip Vidmar (1895–1992) published the book *Kulturni problem slovenstva* (The Cultural Problem of Slovenian Identity), in which he attacked the older generation of Slovenian liberal politicians for compromising the liberal public as hostile to the Slovenian nation by supporting Yugoslav unitarianism.[107] The younger generation of the Slovenian progressive intelligentsia had found itself inadvertently caught between the Slovenian autonomism of conservative Slovenian Catholicism and the integral Yugoslavism of the older liberals. Slightly later the same year, on the occasion of the American-Slovenian writer Louis Adamič's (1898–1951) stay in Slovenia, the poet Oton Župančič (1878–1949) published an article in the premier urban liberal cultural review *Ljubljanski zvon*, where he argued that Adamič had remained Slovenian even though he exclusively wrote in English and had lost his fluency in the

102 See also note 71.

103 Edvard Kardelj, *Razvoj slovenskega narodnega vprašanja* (Ljubljana: Državna založba Slovenije, 1957), iv.

104 Kardelj, *Razvoj slovenskega narodnega vprašanja* (1957), 337.

105 *NB*: The idea was by no means unique to Slovenia. In 1910, the Italian nationalist Enrico Corradini, a contemporary of Cankar, advanced the notion of Italy as a "proletarian nation." Just as the working class was exploited under capitalism, so too, Corradini argued, Italy—as a latecomer nation—was subjected to exploitation by wealthier powers such as Britain and France. Economically underdeveloped and disadvantaged in colonial competition, Italy on this model would be compelled to assert itself militarily in order to gain recognition and secure resources. See Enrico Corradini, "La nazione proletaria," in *Scritti e discorsi 1901–1914*, ed. Lucia Strappini (Turin: Einaudi, 1980), 45–47. Whereas the analogy of Slovenes as a proletarian nation developed within the socialist camp and became a significant ideological foundation of socialist Slovenia in the twentieth century, the Italian version of the analogy served to legitimize expansionist nationalism, colonialism, and ultimately fascism. A comparative analysis of these two phenomena clearly merits closer scholarly attention.

106 Pleterski, "Zgodovinska misel slovenskih marksistov," 538–39.

107 Josip Vidmar, *Kulturni problem slovenstva* (Ljubljana: Tiskovna zadruga, 1932).

Slovenian language.[108] This came in part as a metaphysical rebuttal to Vidmar's view of Slovenian identity—the latter constituted precisely by language use and culture produced within the Slovenian language—and a nod of approval toward the integral Yugoslavism of the older liberals, who likewise argued that even if Slovenes used Serbo-Croatian they could remain nationally Slovenian. The fierce debate that followed led to a dispute within the editorial board and the publishing house of *Ljubljanski zvon*, which decided not to publish Vidmar's response to Župančič in addition to a further set of similarly polemical pieces. Along with Vidmar and a group of other likeminded writers, *Ljubljanski zvon*'s editor until this point, Fran Albreht (1889–1963), resigned in protest, published the articles in a separate volume, and co-founded with Vidmar the new journal *Sodobnost*, which became the primary platform for progressive advocates of Slovenian national individuality through the rest of the 1930s.[109]

By the 1930s, the ideologues of the Catholic camp had differentiated into three distinct currents. While all shared a commitment to an autonomous resolution of the Slovenian position within the Yugoslav framework, they diverged significantly in their conceptions of political order and approaches to the social question. The Catholic Right gravitated toward a fascist rejection of the European democratic tradition. Among its key representatives were Lambert Ehrlich (1878–1942), a theologian and staunch critic of both liberalism and communism, and Ciril Žebot (1914–1989), an economist who later authored a positive treatise on corporatism and fascism.[110] Slovenian political thought considers the sociologist and economist Andrej Gosar (1887–1970) to be the representative figure of Catholic centrism. He advocated a democratic parliamentary system and a market economy, as well as self-management, a robust social system, and the socialization of the economy. The Slovenian Catholic Left, which had been aggressively forced to adopt a corporatist model, increasingly moved toward Marxist principles. In the context of these debates, the Christian socialist trade union (the Yugoslav Professional Association, *Jugoslovanska strokovna zveza*) split from the SLS in 1932.[111] Within the Catholic Left, the priest and labor activist Angelik Tominec (1892–1961) established himself as the central ideologue of the Christian labor movement. Although he rejected socialism and communism as

108 Oton Župančič, "Adamič in slovenstvo," *Ljubljanski zvon* 52, no. 8 (1932), 513–20.

109 Ervin Dolenc, "Kulturni problem slovenstva," in *Slovenska novejša zgodovina: Od programa Zedinjena Slovenija do mednarodnega priznanja Republike Slovenije*, vol. 1 (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga–Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2005), 342–46. See also Fran Albrecht, ed., *Kriza Ljubljanskega zvona* (Ljubljana: Kritika, 1932), for the articles.

110 Ciril Žebot, *Korporativno narodno gospodarstvo: Korporativizem, fašizem, korporativno narodno gospodarstvo* (Celje: Družba sv. Mohorja, 1939).

111 Egon Pelikan, "Andrej Gosar in znamenja časov," *Dr. Andrej Gosar (1887–1970)*, ed. Jure Gašparič and Alenka Veber (Celje: Društvo Mohorjeva družba – Celjska Mohorjeva družba, 2015), 147–61.

godless, he recognized the value of Marxism in terms of its economic analysis of society.[112] Above all, however, the poet Edvard Kocbek (1904–1981) is considered the canonical author of the Catholic Left, whose essay "*Premišljevanje o Španiji*" (A Reflection on Spain, 1937), published in the traditional Catholic outlet *Dom in svet*, shook the conservative Catholic intellectual scene.[113]

Beyond the logic of "camps," Slovenian historiography often also evaluates political thinkers through the lens of their actions and experiences during the Second World War. After the Axis powers invaded Yugoslavia on April 6, 1941, and divided the Slovenian part of Yugoslavia among the three occupying forces—Italy (Lower Carniola, Ljubljana), Hungary (Prekmurje), and Germany (Upper Carniola, Styria, and later taking over the Italian and Hungarian occupation zones in 1943–44)—communists, Christian socialists, a group of cultural workers and the left wing of the Sokol gymnastics association formed the Liberation Front (*Osvobodilna fronta*, OF) and decided to take up armed resistance, forming partisan units. Two figures previously mentioned, Josip Vidmar and Boris Kidrič, participated in the founding meeting of the OF, while Edvard Kardelj and Edvard Kocbek rose to prominent positions within the leadership of the partisan movement after the OF's founding. Slovenian political history written during the socialist period—and beyond—elevated the Fundamental Points of the Liberation Front to the status of a transformative canonical political text. In addition to goals such as national liberation, the realization of a unified Slovenia, and the establishment of a "consistent people's democracy," the document, influenced by Kocbek's initiative, also proclaimed a commitment to "transforming the Slovenian national character."[114] Andrej Gosar, a representative of the Catholic center, chose neither partisan resistance nor collaboration, and in 1944 he was interned in the Dachau concentration camp. The anti-communist activist Lambert Ehrlich was killed by the Security Intelligence Service of the Liberation Front for organizing collaborationist forces.[115] Ciril Žebot was also involved in organizing the anti-communist militia, but after the capitulation of fascist Italy, he fled to Rome. After the war, he became one of the leading thinkers in the Slovenian emigration in the US,

112 Prunk, *Pot krščanskih socialistov*, 105. Silvin Krajnc, "Aktualnost krščanskega socialnega nauka o delu in lastnini p. Angelika Tominca: ob 50. obletnici njegove smrti," *Bogoslovni vestnik* 71, no. 1 (2011): 99–109.

113 Peter Kovačič Peršin, "Kocbekovo *Premišljevanje o Španiji*," *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 56, no. 1 (2016): 56–79. Edvard Kocbek's 1937 article "A Reflection on Spain" is the only text in this collection that has been previously translated and contextualized in English. See Ervin Dolenc, "Kocbek's 'Reflections on Spain': An Introduction," *Slovene Studies* 25, no. 1 (2005): 47–56.

114 Bojan Godeša, "Ustanovitev Osvobodilne fronte slovenskega naroda," in *Slovenska novejša zgodovina*, vol. 1, 608–15. Eva Mally, *Slovenski odpor: Osvobodilna fronta slovenskega naroda od 1941 do 1945* (Ljubljana: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2011), 49–72.

115 Boris Mlakar, "Začetki oboroženih oddelkov protirevolucionarnega tabora v ljubljanski pokrajini," in *Slovenska novejša zgodovina*, vol. 1, 656–61.

became a professor of political economy at Georgetown University, and advocated for the idea of an independent Slovenian state.[116]

In conclusion, the canon of Slovenian political thought predominantly highlights thinkers who advocated for Slovenian individuality, autonomy, or statehood, while those with divergent views are often marginalized as representing a "wrong direction." A central issue within this canon is its complex and often ambivalent relationship to Yugoslavism and/or the Yugoslav state. In the meantime, many—including women activists and feminists—remain still largely excluded from the canon of Slovenian political thought. Moreover, despite historians' awareness of ambiguous contexts and fluid identifications, there persists a strong tendency to categorize canonical thinkers within established political camps, whereas those who do not neatly fit are often overlooked. Finally, we ought to note that the canon disproportionately favors thinkers from central Slovenia over those from peripheral regions.

II: FRAMING THE READER

Situating Slovenia: Yugoslav and Transnational Perspectives

Fragmented by geography, political allegiances, and differing regional identifications (for instance, between Slovenians in Trieste, Maribor, or Ljubljana), the case of Slovenia and the internal heterogeneity of the Slovenian public sphere makes it an ideal site for exploring how competing political visions coexisted and evolved. The concept 'Slovenia' in the period between the two wars was not merely a simple territorial and/or political designation, but a problematic concept that requires a more detailed historical explanation. This section explains what we mean by Slovenia and Slovenian political thought in territorial but also conceptual terms.

How can we discuss Slovenian politics and political thought when Slovenia did not exist as a separate administrative entity either within the Habsburg Empire or interwar Yugoslavia? Can we even speak of a strictly *Slovenian* political space? Following Rogers Brubaker's distinction between categories of practice and categories of analysis, the Slovenian political space could be understood primarily as a category of historical practice.[117] We remain mindful that the political thinkers featured in this book held diverse views on the nature of the space

116 Tamara Griesser Pečar, "Ciril Žebot: Prizadevanje za samostojno Slovenijo," *Acta Histriae* 26, no. 1 (2018): 277–304.

117 Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity,'" *Theory and Society* 29, no. 1 (2000): 1–47.

termed 'Slovenia', yet they did share a common belief in its existence and in their own role in shaping it. Thus, even though Slovenia did not exist on any political map, for most authors of this reader—including, for example, the communist Slovenes from Italy at the time—Slovenia was not merely a future project, but also a tangible and lived reality. Conversely, from the outset, and as visible from Part I of this introduction, the notion of the Slovenian political space has also served as an analytical category for national historiography, carrying a strong risk of reifying or naturalizing Slovenian nationalism. Nevertheless, it is important to stress that these are not unique features of Slovenian politics, but rather common to any modern national political space. Can we clearly define the German political space? Or the French? Factors such as smallness, ambiguity, entanglement with Yugoslavism and (pan- or neo-)Slavism, the lack of a historical state tradition, late emergence of independent national statehood, and uncertain borders do not imply that the Slovenian political space lacked existence or relevance. These characteristics do not render it too marginal to be included in global and comparative analyses either. Moreover, examining the Slovenian political space through comparative and transnational lenses not only broadens the scope of Slovenian national historiography but also offers new insights into fundamental features of the political.

Like other emerging national movements at the time, nationalist Slovenian intellectuals in 1848 drew up the United Slovenia (*Zedinjena Slovenija*) program, which envisaged the unification of territories inhabited by the imagined Slovenian national population into a single political entity founded on ethnolinguistic principles within the Habsburg Empire.[118] Nevertheless, the geographic boundaries of the imagined United Slovenia only loosely align with those of the modern Republic of Slovenia. For Slovenian leaders in the nineteenth century, Trieste and its surroundings were surely part of Slovenia, as was the Gorizia region.[119] "Venetian Slovenia" ("*Beneška Slovenija*"), the territory between today's Cividale and the old Habsburg–Venetian border, which now also corresponds to the present-day border between Slovenia and Italy, was (and still is) considered the westernmost part of the Slovenian national territory.[120] In southern Carinthia, in present-day Austria, the extensive area including Villach, Klagenfurt, and Völkermarkt with their surroundings, as well as the Val Canale, now in Italy, were undoubtedly considered 'Slovenian' by the Slovenian nationalist elite. The border in Styria, as envisaged by Slovenian nationalist activists, ran north of today's

118 Jernej Kosi, *Kako je nastal slovenski narod: začetki slovenskega nacionalnega gibanja v prvi polovici 19. stoletja* (Ljubljana: Sophia, 2016), 45.

119 Jože Pirjevec, *"Trst je naš!": boj Slovencev za morje (1848–1954)* (Ljubljana: Nova revija, 2008).

120 Ines Beguš and Aleksander Panjek, "Mejniki zahodne meje: prelomnice 1420–1866," *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 64, no. 3 (2024): 14–36.

Drava River, Maribor, and the Slovenian Hills. The conviction that part of the Hungarian area along the Mur River was Slovenian was widely accepted among Slovenian ethnographers, but until 1918 it was largely excluded from the political imagination.[121]

The southern border of the imagined Unified Slovenia posed a particular problem before 1918. On the one hand, it could rely on a precisely defined border between Styria, Carniola, and Croatia, which also served as the intra-imperial border with Hungary after 1867. On the other hand, factors such as linguistic proximity, the everyday entanglement of communities along the Hungarian border, the influence of common South Slavic ideology, and political alliances between Slovenian and Croatian nationalism loosened the border with Croatia.[122] Although Slovenian nationalists envisioned the imagined United Slovenia as a clearly bounded and internally ethnically homogeneous space, the reality was far more complex. This vision was complicated by the presence of a sizable German-speaking population in the Kočevje (Gottschee) region of Carniola, the German-speaking population in provincial towns and cities in southern Styria (today's Maribor, Celje, and Ptuj), as well as in Ljubljana and few other areas in rural Carniola. Likewise, Slovenian nationalists could not ignore the predominant presence of the Italian-speaking population in the coastal towns of northern Istria and Trieste.[123]

This ethnocentric perception of Slovenia in Slovenian political circles did not change with the end of the Habsburg Empire and the establishment of the common South Slavic state in 1918. Slovenian politicians viewed the new borders as a great disappointment. The Treaty of Saint-Germain (1919), followed by the Carinthian plebiscite in 1920, severed the historically significant regions of southern Carinthia from the newly formed Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. The Treaty of Rapallo (1920) went even further, cutting deeper into the perceived Slovenian "national body" by awarding Italy not only the former Austrian Littoral—including Trieste, Gorizia, and Istria—but also parts of former Carniola, such as Postojna and Idrija. On the other hand, Yugoslavia gained the former Hungarian border area along the Mur River, mostly populated by Slovenian speakers, which became known as Prekmurje.[124] While the southern border of Slovenia was relatively clear during the Habsburg period as the border

121 Jernej Kosi, "The Imagined Slovene Nation and Local Categories of Identification: 'Slovenes' in the Kingdom of Hungary and Postwar Prekmurje," *Austrian History Yearbook* 49 (2018): 87–102.

122 Marko Zajc, *Kje se slovensko neha in hrvaško začne: slovensko-hrvaška meja v 19. in na začetku 20. stoletja* (Ljubljana: Modrijan, 2006).

123 Jasna Fischer, "Slovensko narodno ozemlje in razvoj prebivalstva," in *Slovenska novejša zgodovina*, vol. 1, 17–21.

124 Nevenka Troha and Milica Kacin-Wohinz, "Mirovna konferenca in oblikovanje mej," in *Slovenska novejša zgodovina*, vol. 1, 218–26.

between the Cisleithanian and Transleithanian parts of the empire, after 1918 this demarcation became less important, and administrative borders regularly changed. For example, between 1929 and 1931, the Bela Krajina (before 1918 part of Carniola) was part of the Sava Banovina with its center in Zagreb. After 1918, the term Slovenia took on a new meaning in the sense of a narrower, Yugoslav Slovenia, but the term Slovenia as a designation for the entire territory inhabited by the Slovenian population also remained in use. The two meanings intertwined, and in public discourse it is often difficult to determine which meaning the actors had in mind.

To further complicate the Slovenian political landscape, it is necessary to briefly address the significant yet deeply ambiguous relationship with Yugoslavism. In the nineteenth century, Slovenian nationalist activists lacked a clear vision of how Slovenian national integration should ultimately unfold—whether through the formation of a distinct Slovenian nation or within a broader Yugoslav or even pan-Slavic nation. The options were not limited to just these two paths. A variety of vague and intermediate models emerged, envisioning a future in which Slovenians would preserve their language and identity while still joining with their "South Slav brethren" in a unified entity, adopting a shared, broader language but maintaining their distinct cultural features.[125] After the rupture of 1918, a particularly *Yugoslav* nationalism gained a foothold in the new state. While national-cultural autonomist programs were put forward by the left-wing "Masarykians" around Albin Prepeluh, Dragotin Lončar, and Fran Erjavec as well as by Slovenian Catholic conservatives led by Anton Korošec and the Slovenian People's Party, Slovenian urban liberals internalized the idea of a single, integral Yugoslav nation, although they never renounced Slovenian language and culture. As Siniša Malešević notes, Yugoslav nationalism often developed not in opposition to separate ethno-nationalisms but as an overlay to existing ethno-nationalist projects. Despite its professed civic character, the institutional structures of the interwar Yugoslav state often functioned as platforms that supported and facilitated the growth of distinct Serbian, Croatian, Slovenian, and other ethno-nationalist agendas.[126]

Overall, then, in the Slovenian case of a small nation characterized by gradual territorial delimitation and the equally gradual acquisition of the classic attributes of statehood, methodological nationalism can only resort to and reproduce

125 Marko Zajc, "Jugoslovanstvo pri Slovencih v 19. stoletju v kontekstu sosednjih 'združevalnih' nacionalnih ideologij," v *Evropski vplivi na slovensko družbo*, eds. Nevenka Troha, Mojca Šorn, and Bojan Balkovec (Ljubljana: Zveza zgodovinskih društev Slovenije, 2008), 103–14.

126 Siniša Malešević, "Grounding Civic Nationhood: The Rise and Fall of Yugoslav Nationalism, 1918–91," *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 66, no. 1–2 (2024): 8–35.

anachronisms and determinism.[127] Although there were no territorial units called "Slovenia" at that time, nationalist historiography treats the historical reality before 1945 as if a proto-state of Slovenia already existed at a meta level, or as if the development towards an independent state was inevitable.

By contrast, in this reader we make a conscious effort to avoid methodological nationalism.[128] Rather than essentializing Slovenians, we understand Slovenia as a borderland space shaped by post-imperial legacies, competing national projects, and transnational ideological flows. There are three central "spaces" through which to approach Slovenia, each with their own thematic and conceptual features. The first is to situate Slovenia as a Habsburg and post-Habsburg space, which persisted in legal, administrative, and intellectual forms well into the twentieth century. This context is particularly visible in the contributions relating to the city of Trieste, which was in the early twentieth century one of the centers of Slovenian national and Habsburg imperial political and intellectual life. The second is Slovenia as part of a broader South Slavic space, with its complex dynamics of state-building, collective identity-formation, and political centralization. The third space is Slovenia within the macro-regional space of East Central Europe, which here can be detected in the reception of the work of figures like Tomáš Masaryk or in shared regional debates on state form, democracy, social reform, or even the particular forms that Marxist thinking took on within this European semi-periphery marked by predominantly agrarian economic structures.

In this approach, we build on the work of historians who have problematized the approach to the national question from a non-nationalist perspective. Jernej Kosi and Rok Stergar argue that the Slovenian nation emerged in the same way and at the same time as other Central European nations and is therefore a modern phenomenon. In their opinion, the Slovenian ethnic community did not exist as a precursor to the nation. Belonging to the nation gradually spread among the population through the agitation of nationalist organizations, the mass politicization of the population and the classificatory activities of the Habsburg state (e.g., gathering statistics in schools or through the central bureaucracy). Kosi and Stergar criticize above all the generally accepted equation in Slovenian historiography that the Slovenian ethnic space equals the area of the Slovenian-speaking population. The modern concept of ethnicity is primarily concerned with self-identification; an ethnic group that does not see itself as an ethnic group does not

127 Anna Milioni, "What Is Wrong with Methodological Nationalism? An Argument About Discrimination," *Moral Philosophy and Politics* 12, no. 2 (2024, forthcoming), https://doi.org/10.1515/mopp-2024-0033. Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory* 8, no. 1 (1969): 3–53.

128 Stefan Berger, "Nationalism in Historiography: The Pitfalls of Methodology," in *Writing the History of Nationalism*, eds. Stefan Berger and Eric Storm (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 19–40.

exist. The authors argue that procedures for identifying ethnic groups based on "objective" characteristics (language, culture, phenotype, genotype, etc.) belong to the realm of the construction/invention of ethnic groups and are therefore a matter of politics rather than the science of ethnicity.[129] Kosi's and Stergar's approach is a part of recent historiography on Habsburg and post-Habsburg history, which historian Marco Bresciani has referred to as "transnational approaches to the transitions, imperial collapses, and legacies of post-World War I Europe." As he argued in his article on post-Habsburg Trieste, historiography has often uncritically accepted the divisions between national communities, mirroring the language of primary sources and thereby overlooking the complex dynamics of agency and self-identification.[130] After the collapse of the Habsburg empire, he continues, the northern Adriatic was "marked by multiple forms of local and regional loyalism, bilingualism, multiculturalism, and internationalism," and these complex dynamics and overlapping loyalties have to be taken into account.[131]

Framing his analysis of crisis discourses in interwar Europe, Balázs Trencsényi has reflected on the very framework of "European intellectual history," problematic for its Euro-centric approach and the overlooking of connectivities beyond what is usually considered 'Europe'. Yet, as Trencsényi emphasizes, "Europe remained a central point of reference in these conversations and for many participants had a pivotal historical and even 'historiographic' role in shaping the global crisis dynamic." He argues that 'Europe' should not be assumed but thoroughly historicized, as it did not represent a uniform or universally shared ideational construct.[132] Similarly, as mentioned earlier, many of the sources in the reader show that 'Slovenia' was often central in the discussions of the historical actors, therefore it remains highly relevant for analysis. Even so, as the contextualizations will make clear, the idea of Slovenia discussed and imagined by different actors was not a unified concept, and the ways Slovenia and the national question were discussed depended not only on the political allegiances of the political thinkers, but also on their location, age, gender, and life trajectories.

129 Jernej Kosi and Rok Stergar, "Kdaj so nastali 'lubi Slovenci'?: O identitetah v prednacionalni dobi in njihovi domnevni vlogi pri nastanku slovenskega naroda," *Zgodovinski časopis* 70, no. 3–4 (2016): 458–88. See also Kosi, *Kako je nastal slovenski narod*, 79–360; as well as Rok Stergar and Tamara Scheer, "Ethnic Boxes: The Unintended Consequences of Habsburg Bureaucratic Classification," *Nationalities Papers* 43, no. 4 (2018): 575–91.

130 Marco Bresciani, "The Battle for Post-Habsburg Trieste/Trst: State Transition, Social Unrest, and Political Radicalism (1918–23)," *Austrian History Yearbook* 52 (2021): 182–200. See also: Daša Ličen, *Meščanstvo v zalivu: društveno življenje v habsburškem Trstu* (Ljubljana: Studia humanitatis, Založba ZRC, 2023). Pieter Judson, *The Habsburg Empire: A New History* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2018).

131 Ibid., 184.

132 Trencsényi, *Intellectuals and the Crisis of Politics*, 8.

Choosing the Sources: Diversifying Slovenian Political Thought

When it comes to our choice of the sources, the reader does not offer a comprehensive overview of Slovenian political thought, nor does it cover all streams of interwar political thought. Rather, it offers a cross-section of current research and aims in general at opening up space for further discussion and further research. The selection process was done in conversation with the contributors themselves rather than delegated to them. We asked the contributors to suggest the surveyed individuals and their source texts and to relate them to the topics of their current research. As a result, while addressing the overarching theme of the transformation of political thought, the sixteen sources included here also reflect an overview of the recent and current research in the field of intellectual history and the history of political thought in East Central Europe, particularly that of a younger generation of historians working on the history of the interwar period. This selection of sources reflects current trends in the history of political thought—namely, the expansion of the category of the political thinker, the broadening of the types of sources considered relevant, and the inclusion of themes that have so far been rarely explored within the national history of Slovenian political thought (or political thought more broadly).

First, the choice of sources expand the category of the political thinker and, through biographies, also our knowledge of the intellectual trajectories of these political thinkers. This is particularly relevant for Slovenian historiography, where, as outlined above, the focus has been largely restricted to the representatives of political parties and some important thinkers. This meant that the contributors went beyond only providing basic biographical facts such as an author's social and family background or their professional roles. While some entries cover canonical figures such as Josip Wilfan or Edvard Kocbek, the reader also introduces lesser-known thinkers. In some cases, the contributors even explicitly argue that certain figures should be seen as political thinkers. The best example for this is Viktor Murnik, who was primarily a physical educator and a gymnast active in the Sokol movement. However, as Lucija Balikić argues, he was also a prolific author and political thinker who articulated ideas about the relationship of body and mind by discussing the national question and civilizational hierarchies. Another example is Minka Govekar; while so far presented in historiography mainly as a feminist activist, her political thought has not been the focus of historical research. Some biographies, such as Manca G. Renko's biography of the communist activist Leopoldina Kos, appear here for the first time.

Second, the reader expands the range of sources typically used in the study of political thought in Slovenia. The sources included in this volume were mostly originally published as small treatises, booklets, or periodical articles. The first

category comprises published and self-published texts, which are among the most common types of sources in the history of political thought: these include Albin Prepeluh's *Why Are We Republicans?* and Josip Vilfan's *The Congress of European Nationalities and the Peace Problem* (presented here in its original English-language version). Also featured are Dragotin Godina's *Exchange Cooperatives Will Free Us from the Slavery of Money and Capital* and Viktor Murnik's *Culture and Physical Exercise*. Andrej Gosar's text "The Woman Question" is a subchapter of his extensive two-volume book *Za nov družabni red* (For a New Social Order), in which he attempted to address all social problems and propose solutions that would be in line with both Catholic social doctrine and modern democratic society.

Most of the sources originally appeared as articles in periodicals, which serve as an important layer of contextualization. Often aligned with specific political parties or ideological positions, periodicals help situate the author within a particular "periodical community"—what historian Lucy Delap called the "material, cultural, and intellectual milieu of a periodical"[133]—and provide insight into the intended audience of a given political intervention. Alongside well-known pieces such as Edvard Kocbek's "A Reflection on Spain," published in the periodical *Dom in svet* (Home and the World, presented here in translation), the volume also includes lesser-known texts, such as articles on the "woman question" by Angela Vode and Leopoldina Kos, published in the 1930s Marxist periodical *Književnost* (Literature). Aside from these two, other source texts are drawn from the Trieste-based Slovenian-language communist newspaper *Delo* (Labor); the eponymous Slovenian-language organ of the Organization of Yugoslav Nationalists, *Orjuna*; the main newspaper of Slovenian communists, *Glas svobode* (The Voice of Freedom); the independent political newspaper *Narodni dnevnik* (The National Journal); the May Day edition of the bilingual Slovenian- and English-language socialist paper *Proletarec* (The Proletarian) from Chicago, *Majski glas* (May Herald); and the liberal youth magazine *Naša misel* (Our Thought).

The reader also includes some less typical and generally underused types of sources. One such example is a text by Zofka Kveder, a pioneering Slovenian writer and a central figure of *fin-de-siècle* feminism in the Slovenian context. The source translated here is the afterword to a play she wrote in 1922 under the male pseudonym Dimitrije Gvozdenović. Translated into English by Isidora Grubački, the original text was written in what we refer to as the "Yugoslav" language—a non-standard, imperfect Serbo-Croatian shaped by Kveder's Slovenian background and her commitment to Yugoslavist ideology, which is also reflected in

133 Lucy Delap, "The Freewoman, Periodical Communities, and the Feminist Reading Public," *The Princeton University Library Chronicle* 61, no. 2 (2000): 233–76.

the content of the afterword. Another unusual source is the previously unpublished conference speech of communist Albert Hlebec, preserved in the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI) in Moscow and translated from Russian by Stefan Gužvica. A further noteworthy source is a 1935 radio address by interwar feminist Minka Govekar, delivered as part of "*Ženska ura*" (Women's Hour), a program regularly broadcast on Slovenian radio to extend the reach of the *Dravska* Section of the Yugoslav National Council of Women (*Jugoslovanska ženska zveza*), the central Slovenian women's organization. This and similar speeches, preserved in the Archive of the Republic of Slovenia, not only broaden the source base for analyzing feminist political thought but also offer insight into how interwar feminists communicated with wider audiences beyond traditional organizations and periodical communities.

Finally, the reader offers a variety of themes, some of which have rarely been explored within the history of Slovenian political thought. As elaborated earlier, we find in Slovenian historiography the metaphor of political camps as an undefined conceptual tool used to facilitate understanding of the complex political landscape of the past, often without precise distinctions between the category of historical practice and the category of analysis when using this term.[134] In our view, the use of the concept of political camps in historiography can be consistent with modern historical methodology, but only if its use is well defined.[135] Different political camps have different structures, some are more homogeneous, others are highly fragmented. While the use of the term 'camp' as a homogeneous structure makes sense in the case of Slovenian Catholic politics with its ramified but structured organization of political, cultural, and economic organizations,[136] by contrast the term 'camp' has a much looser character in the case of the liberal and Marxist milieux. As Oskar Mulej observes, the liberal camp was fundamentally characterized by the primacy of civil society over the party, a greater degree of internal autonomy within each sphere, and a looser connection between them. The result was a lower degree of internal uniformity, ideological and organizational unity, and discipline.[137] Slovenian historiography includes such diverse political organizations as the Yugoslav Democratic Party, the National Socialist Party, and even the National Radical Party in Slovenia among the liberal camp.[138]

134 Brubaker and Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity'"; the distinction expanded also in Rogers Brubaker, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

135 As in Mulej, "Stanje in notranja razmerja v slovenskem naprednem (liberalnem) taboru."

136 Jure Gašparič, "Slovenska ljudska stranka in njena organizacija (1890–1941)," *Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino* 57, no. 1 (2017): 25–48.

137 Mulej, "Stanje in notranja razmerja v slovenskem naprednem (liberalnem) taboru," 43.

138 Jurij Perovšek, *Programi slovenskih političnih strank, organizacij in združenj v letih 1918–1929: Pregled k slovenski politični zgodovini* (Ljubljana: Inštitut za novejšo zgodovino, 2018), electronic resource, http://hdl.handle.net/11686/38363.

In the Marxist camp, there is a clearer schism between communist and socialist organizations.[139] The use of the term 'camp' in academic historiography can furthermore be problematic if the concept becomes a marker for a "natural" division among transgenerational worldviews in political life. This perception of political camps fits nicely with methodological nationalism, which assumes that the nation-state is the natural basic unit of study and that this territorial unit should serve as a container for society, with political camps playing the role of compartments within this container.[140]

By contrast, we emphasize the complexities of the interwar era and the trajectories that fall outside the traditional tripartite camp division, shedding light on the many shifts and transformations that occurred. In thinking "outside of the 'political camps' box," we take a more comprehensive view of the ideological projects of the interwar period. Historicizing and pluralizing various ideologies—not only socialism, liberalism, or conservatism, but also feminism or republicanism—allows for a relational analysis and attention to be drawn to the genealogical and analogical links between them.[141] Not only were there many different liberalisms, socialisms, or feminisms, but these ideologies transformed and/or took on different meanings with changes within the Yugoslav context from the early 1920s to the late 1930s.

Several themes stand out in the reader. Notably, most of the contributions engage with leftist traditions, in ways that further complicate what the authors of *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe* have called "the many faces of leftism." This includes communist thinkers such as Jože Srebrnič, Dragotin Godina, and Albert Hlebec, but also the republican political thought of Albin Prepeluh and Etbin Kristan, or feminist interventions in communist political thought, such as those of Leopoldina Kos and Angela Vode. Some of these texts particularly enhance our understanding of the relationship between nationalism, socialism, and agrarianism.[142] Furthermore, the texts of Kos and Vode, together with those of Kveder and Govekar, showcase women's political thought, both feminist and non-feminist. On the other hand, the reader also brings a source of the Catholic thinker Andrej Gosar, and his elaboration on the woman question. Many of the texts from the 1930s, moreover, contribute to our understanding of the Popular Front. Besides Angela Vode, mentioned previously, whose source enhances our understanding of cooperation between the so-called bourgeois feminists and communist women, Edvard Kocbek's well-known "A

139 Perovšek, *Samoodločba in federacija*, 13.
140 Sebastian Conrad, *What Is Global History?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016), 3.
141 See, e.g., Trencsényi, *Intellectuals and the Crisis of Politics*, 11.
142 For a detailed discussion of earlier socialisms in the region, in the case of Bulgaria, see Maria Todorova, *The Lost World of Socialists at Europe's Margins* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020).

Reflection on Spain" offers a view into the leftist Catholic approach in the context of the Popular Front, both in its institutionalization in Spain (and France), but also internationally as a broader and contested political concept.

Unsurprisingly, the national question—whether Slovenian or Yugoslav—is present across various contributions. The national question is in many cases examined from fresh perspectives, showcasing a multiplicity of views on the national question cutting across diverse ideological streams and changing over time. The contributions here mostly address the Yugoslav question and contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between Slovenian and Yugoslav national questions. These texts can be read together in a complementary way. For example, Zofka Kveder's text on Yugoslavism hews close to the vision of the Organization of Yugoslav Nationalists (*Organizacija jugoslavenskih nacionalista*, Orjuna), thus framing the debate between Orjuna and the communists in 1924 as introduced by Marko Zajc as well as the discussion around Ljubomir Dušanov Jurković provided by Neja Blaj Hribar. Conversely, Jurković's text, which represents the view of a student from the University of Ljubljana on Yugoslavism in the early 1920s can be creatively read with the source by Andrej Uršič, likewise a student, but in the late 1930s, introduced by Oskar Mulej.

The contributors also made a deliberate effort to incorporate Yugoslav and transnational perspectives into the contextualizations wherever possible, with the aim of de-provincializing Slovenian political thought. As discussed above, this was achieved in part by situating Slovenian political thinkers within the broader framework of Yugoslav political discourse—highlighting their contributions to debates on the national question and other key issues of the time. Some sources also reveal the challenges of assigning certain political thinkers to a single national canon. A notable example is the case of communist thinkers Jože Srebrnič and Dragotin Godina, both members of the Italian Communist Party, whose work defies easy national categorization. Many of the texts additionally trace how Slovenian political thinkers engaged with contemporary European intellectual currents, particularly those in German- and French-language literature. This is evident in Viktor Murnik's reliance on contemporary physical education theorists such as Karl Gaulhofer and Margarete Streicher; or in Angela Vode's close engagement with Alice Rühle-Gerstel's *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart* (1932); as well as in Edvard Kocbek's intellectual affinity with the French journal *Esprit*.

The Sources

Overall, then, the sources in this reader offer more insight into the complex transformation of political thought from the pre-1914 Habsburg context to the interwar, post-Habsburg realities of Italy and Yugoslavia, and so provide a more nuanced view of the overlaps and shifts among different ideological currents, including the communist, socialist, liberal, Catholic, republican, feminist, and agrarian traditions. After considering several ways to present these sources thematically—both in this introduction and in the structure of the reader—we ultimately chose to present them in a chronological order. This decision allows readers greater freedom to draw their own connections and interpret the sources from multiple perspectives.

The reader starts with the discussion of the agrarian question, so relevant in the context of the Slovenian space encompassed in the reader. **Jože Srebrnič**, a farmer himself, stands out as an example of a Slovenian Marxist who addressed the relationship between communism and the agrarian question even before the First World War. Based in Solkan near Gorizia, he practiced his internationalist communist ideals as a member of the Yugoslav Social Democratic Party (*Jugoslovanska socialdemokratska stranka*, JSDS) before 1914 and later as a member of the Italian Communist Party after 1921. As Stefan Gužvica notes, Srebrnič advocated for an agrarian policy centered on the collectivization of agriculture during the interwar period, thereby challenging the prevailing Bolshevik approach, which prioritized land distribution before collectivization.

Manca G. Renko's selection of **Zofka Kveder's** text is a particularly compelling contribution to this reader, as it presents a feminist author engaging with a non-feminist theme. Such sources are often overlooked. They are either considered less relevant or avoided for fear of complicating the image of an "ideal" feminist figure. A key figure of *fin-de-siècle* Austro-Hungarian feminism, Kveder was active primarily in Prague, Ljubljana, and Zagreb. At the time, she identified as a socialist and maintained friendships with figures such as Etbin Kristan, though she never formally joined the Yugoslav Social Democratic Party.[143] Following the First World War, Yugoslav nationalism came to dominate her political thinking, gradually eclipsing her earlier feminist commitments. The afterword to Kveder's play *The Grandson of Prince Marko*—written under a male pseudonym and featured in this reader—represents this nationalist turn in her work. As Renko insightfully notes, even in her final collection of short stories, published in 1926 and focused primarily on themes of heartbreak, Kveder portrayed women from various parts of Yugoslavia who were abandoned by their husbands and lovers, subtly continuing her feminist critique.

143 Erna Muser, "Zofka Kvedrova," in Zofka Kveder, *Odsevi* (Ljubljana: Mladinska knjiga, 1970), 163–71.

In many ways complementary to Renko's contribution, Marko Zajc's examination of the ideological struggle between the **Yugoslav nationalist paramilitary organization Orjuna and the communists** highlights how discourses of violence can distort political thought. The central event in this discussion is the violent clash between communist and Orjuna fighters in the mining town of Trbovlje on June 1, 1924. Rather than focusing on individual biographies, since the authors were largely anonymous, Zajc analyzes the press debate between the two opposing camps. On the communist side, he foregrounds the periodical *Glas svobode*, which played a significant role in shaping the Communist Party of Yugoslavia's approach to the national question. On the Orjuna side, he examines contributions from the nationalist newspaper *Orjuna*, initially edited by Ljubomir D. Jurković—whose writings are also included in this volume. Zajc's analysis reveals how the concept of "defense" was central to both sides: for the communists, it meant defending workers from Orjuna violence; for Orjuna, it meant defending the Yugoslav nation from perceived internal enemies.

In contrast to Srebrnič, **Albin Prepeluh's** text reflects a transformation from reformist socialism in the pre-1914 period to a political position that blended republicanism with agrarianism, socialism, and Masarykian ideals. Like Srebrnič, Prepeluh was a member of the Yugoslav Social Democratic Party, but he went further by explicitly challenging Karl Kautsky's emphasis on the proletarian core of the party over its agrarian concerns. In a 1902 letter, Prepeluh argued that building a mass socialist party in an agrarian society required direct engagement with the peasantry. After leaving the JSDS by the beginning of 1921, as Cody James Inglis shows, he continued to develop his ideas within a republican political language. Notably, this was framed through an emphasis on the inherent democratic character of the Slovenian people, but linked to European traditions. The program included here was co-authored by Prepeluh and the historian Dragotin Lončar, forming part of the broader emergence of republican discourses on the Left in the 1920s, similar to developments elsewhere in Yugoslavia and indeed in East Central Europe more broadly. As Inglis notes, however, the explicit concept 'republic' gradually lost its traction in the second half of the decade, giving way to the broader and more encompassing concept of 'democracy' within republican political thought.

Unlike Srebrnič and Prepeluh, **Dragotin Godina** was initially active in the Slovenian nationalist movement before the First World War. He became involved with the Marxist tradition and the labor movement only in 1916, during his time in Moscow. Prior to that, he had worked as a traveling salesman, bookkeeper, and accountant in various cities, including Trieste, Split, Zagreb, Kragujevac, Belgrade, and Sofia. Following his engagement with communism in Moscow

and later in Trieste between 1916 and 1923, Godina then broke with the Italian Communist Party due to his ultra-leftist positions. Nevertheless, he continued to develop theories advocating a moneyless society. As Stefan Gužvica argues, Godina's principal departure from orthodox Marxism lay in his belief that exploitation originates in the act of trade itself, rather than in the extraction of surplus labor. Because of his original contributions to ideas of a cooperative moneyless society, Gužvica considers him a significant figure within the landscape of non-communist, anti-capitalist political thought in the interwar period.

Albert Hlebec is another communist thinker featured in this reader. Unlike many others who had been involved with the Yugoslav Social Democratic Party before the First World War, little is known about Hlebec's early political affiliations beyond his activity within the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. A trade union organizer and journalist from Trbovlje, he remained a committed communist throughout the interwar period, ultimately dying by suicide in 1939 in response to the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact. Within the Communist Party, Hlebec represented a distinctly Slovenian independentist current and strongly opposed the ideology of Yugoslavism. The source included in this reader reflects this central theme. At the Sixth Comintern Congress in Moscow in 1928, where he served as a delegate, Hlebec proposed that Slovenia—situated on the border between Austria, Italy, and Yugoslavia—should become the "Macedonia of Europe." Notably, he employed the language of colonialism to describe Slovenia's position within Yugoslavia and supported his claims with specific examples of the unequal tax burden imposed on Slovenians.

Given **Ljubomir D. Jurković's** connection to *Orjuna*, it is unsurprising that his primary focus was on the national question and Yugoslavism. Like Zofka Kveder, who relocated from Ljubljana and Prague to Zagreb, Jurković moved from Dalmatia—where he had been active in the anti-Austrian Yugoslav youth movement *Preporod*—to Prague and later to Ljubljana after the First World War. This trajectory shaped his growing interest in Yugoslavism, particularly in the early 1920s, during his studies at the Faculty of Arts at the University of Ljubljana. In Ljubljana, Jurković was active in several student clubs as well as in the People's Radical Party, and he maintained close ties with the local Serbian community, within which he held a number of roles. He held the view that Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes were originally one nation, later divided artificially by external forces—a unity he believed could be revived in the form of a renewed Yugoslav nation, paying particular attention to the relationship between being Yugoslav and being Slovenian. As Neja Blaj Hribar notes, Jurković saw the newly established University of Ljubljana as a potential pioneer in promoting Yugoslavism. Both the contextualization of his work and the selected source provide a valuable insight into early 1920s approaches to the national question.

The source by **Viktor Murnik**, contextualized by Lucija Balikić, adds further depth to the reader's exploration of the national question. Murnik was active in the Sokol gymnastic movement, which Balikić describes as "one of the key loci of nation-building and the dissemination of national ideas." Within this context, Murnik undertook the development of a systematic, professional terminology related to gymnastics and movement in the Slovenian and Serbo-Croatian languages—thereby challenging the previous dominance of German and Czech in the movement. He also sought to conceptualize the relationship between bodily movement and national culture. The translated source is a booklet he self-published in 1929, offering a striking example of his ideological transformation. It reflects his shift from an optimistic, culturally Yugoslavist evolutionist to a culturally pessimistic thinker who increasingly biologized and essentialized cultural phenomena, a change shaped by his growing disillusionment with the turbulent politics of the 1920s. In her contextualization, Balikić also examines Murnik's perspective on the distinction between Western European competitive sports and the Swedish, German, and Sokol gymnastic systems, and further analyzes his political thought as reflecting an antimodernist and evolutionist approach to civilizational hierarchies.

The following two examples offer complementary yet distinct perspectives on feminism and the "woman question" by communist writers Angela Vode and Leopoldina Kos, published in the periodical *Književnost* in 1933 and 1934, respectively. As both authors were members of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, their writings complicate the commonly held view of the relationship between communism and feminism during this period. **Angela Vode's** article, written from a Marxist feminist perspective, presents a developed analysis of the "woman question" that draws primarily on German-language literature, including August Bebel's *Die Frau und der Sozialismus* (1879) and Alice Rühle-Gerstel's *Das Frauenproblem der Gegenwart* (1932), but also other contemporary socialist feminist works. According to Isidora Grubački, Vode's article constitutes an intervention against the dominant position among Slovenian communists in the early 1930s, which often rejected non-communist women's organizing. At the same time, Vode's contribution engages with the broader transnational debate on the "crisis of feminism" in the 1930s, involving figures such as Rühle-Gerstel, as well as Czechoslovak and Yugoslav feminist thinkers like Julka Chlapcová-Đorđević and Alojzija Štebi. Overall, the source may be understood as Vode's intellectual contribution—alongside her activism—toward bridging the divide between the women's movement and the workers' movement.

The source by **Leopoldina Kos** can be read as an implicit response to Angela Vode's article, appearing one year later in the same journal. Unlike the prolific

Vode, Kos published relatively little; her primary role was that of a political organizer, with a particular focus on rural communities, especially women. Her work reflects a more practical, grassroots engagement with communist and feminist politics. Kos's trajectory, like that of several other figures in this volume, highlights 1926 as a year of significant transformation—largely as a result of the tightening of the fascist regime in Italy. It was during this period that Kos, politically formed as a Slovenian and Yugoslav nationalist in the prewar Habsburg Empire, moved from the Italian-controlled town of Idrija to Ljubljana, which was then part of Yugoslavia. This relocation marked a turning point in Kos's political orientation and activism. In contrast to Vode's nuanced engagement with feminist thought, Kos's article presents a more direct and uncompromising critique of the "bourgeois feminist" movement. As Manca G. Renko notes in her contextualization, Kos appears to have had limited familiarity with the actual work of feminist thinkers. Renko insightfully argues that intellectual and political positions are often shaped by partial or limited information; this observation helps explain Kos's stance and sheds light on broader dynamics within leftist critiques of feminism at the time.

Besides Albin Prepeluh, another republican political thinker present in this reader is **Etbin Kristan**, a co-founder of the Yugoslav Social Democratic Party in the Habsburg Empire. On the eve of the First World War in 1914, Kristan moved to the United States of America, where he continued to develop his federal and republican political ideas in the framework of his Chicago-based organization, the Slovenian Republican Alliance (*Slovensko republičansko združenje*, SRZ), founded in 1917 out of the Yugoslav Socialist Federation, a member branch of the Socialist Party USA. He returned to Yugoslavia in autumn 1920 to advocate for the idea of a federal Yugoslav republic within the JSDS in the context of the Constituent Assembly. When the body opted for a centralist, monarchist constitution on Vidovdan (June 28) 1921, Kristan returned to the US, later opening a small diner in Michigan with his wife. Yet, as Cody James Inglis argues, he continuously advocated for socialist ideas even in his turn away from active politics in the rest of the 1920s. The translated source is his 1934 article "Un-American Socialism," one of his first texts published after rejoining the Slovenian-American socialist movement in the Midwest. There, Kristan argued that socialism was neither anti-national nor unpatriotic in American terms; while doing so, as Inglis argues, Kristan also rejected the Stalinist temptation on the American Left by reiterating his own vision of a republican socialist "federalism of nations" in the context of the international authoritarian developments of the 1930s.

Another important contribution to interwar feminist political thought is the work of **Minka Govekar**, a strong advocate for women's equal status in society.

She framed her arguments primarily within the contexts of family and nation, which in contrast to her close fellow activist Angela Vode, positions her feminist thought on the more conservative end of the political spectrum. Govekar focused in particular on what she referred to as "the housework question," which, as Isidora Grubački argues, was a central element of her political thought and a significant aspect of the broader history of Slovenian (feminist) political discourse. In addition to highlighting radio speeches as a rich source for understanding women's activism and political thought in this period, the text also reveals the continuity of Minka Govekar's engagement with the issue of housework, spanning from the early 1900s to the late 1930s. The analysis, however, notes an important development in her thinking during the 1930s: Govekar increasingly advocated for the professionalization of housework. While this was becoming a significant theme within the international women's movement at the time, the source also briefly suggests the potential significance of Slovenian women's contributions to these broader transnational debates.

The following source presents a text by **Josip Vilfan (Wilfan)**, one of the most significant European liberal theorists of the minority question in the interwar period. Born in Habsburg Trieste, in the border region of the Julian March, Vilfan's personal background deeply informed his lifelong engagement with issues of national identity and minority rights. He was a founding member of the Vienna-based Congress of European Nationalities (1925–1939), within which he produced his most influential work. Through this organization, Vilfan played a key role in articulating the modern concept of the national minority, consistently upholding liberal internationalist values and practices throughout his life. According to Lucija Balikić, the 1936 text included here—*The Congress of European Nationalities and the Peace Problem*—marks a shift in Vilfan's liberal internationalist rhetoric. Whereas earlier formulations projected an image of objectivity and universal order, this later text adopted a more explicitly defensive tone. Balikić argues that this shift reveals how closely linked the concepts of national minority, assimilation, and minority rights were to specific historical circumstances. More broadly, the source underscores the crucial role played by post-Habsburg liberal thinkers in shaping these conceptual frameworks.

The following two texts—by Edvard Kocbek and Andrej Gosar—represent the Catholic strand of political thought included in this reader. **Edvard Kocbek** is widely regarded as one of the most important Slovenian Christian socialist thinkers. The translated source is his canonical 1937 text "A Reflection on Spain," in which Kocbek famously took a public stance in support of the republican side in the Spanish Civil War. This marked a decisive break with the mainstream Catholic camp and brought him ideologically closer to the Yugoslav Left. Veljko

Stanić situates Kocbek within the transnational Catholic Left too, emphasizing the influence of the French journal *Esprit*, one of the few Catholic publications that did not respond to the Spanish Civil War with outright anti-communism. Stanić reads Kocbek's intervention in the context of his intellectual development, including his education in Romance languages and his time in France in the early 1930s, where he encountered emerging nonconformist left-wing Catholic circles around figures such as Emmanuel Mounier and Georges Izard, from which the ideas of personalism emerged, a sort of "third way" between capitalism and communism which emphasized both the individual and the community.

The source by **Andrej Gosar** offers a contrasting perspective on the "woman question" from that of a centrist Catholic political thinker. A prominent Catholic intellectual, Gosar was actively involved in the Slovenian People's Party and served as Minister of Social Affairs in the national government from 1927 to 1928. A critic of existing parliamentarism, he advocated for its reform and maintained a consistent social theory throughout the 1920s and 1930s, centered on democracy, reformed parliamentarism, and private property. The selected source is drawn from his major work *Za nov družabni red* (For a New Social Order), in which he addresses, among other topics, the role of women in society. When read in contrast to the writings of Angela Vode, Leopoldina Kos, and Minka Govekar, Gosar's position reveals a significant divergence: although he supported women's suffrage and participation in public life, his vision of a just social order assumed that men would earn enough to support their wives, making women's employment unnecessary. This position stood in direct opposition to the core feminist demand for women's economic independence.

The final source is a text by **Andrej Uršič**, whom Oskar Mulej situates within the "liberal" camp of interwar Slovenian politics, defined by its anti-clerical stance and support for Yugoslav nationalism. Most of Uršič's writings focused on the issue of Yugoslav national unity, which he defended as a member of the Yugoslav National Party (*Jugoslovenska nacionalna stranka*). His political thought reflects a persistent commitment to Yugoslav unity during the volatile period between the 1939 Cvetković–Maček Agreement and the onset of the Second World War in 1941. The text included here is a direct response to the Cvetković–Maček Agreement and offers a pragmatic, grounded defense of Yugoslavism, representative of a generation that had come to see Yugoslavia as a fully consolidated political reality.