

DICIONÁRIO DE HISTORIADORES PORTUGUESES

DA ACADEMIA REAL DAS CIÊNCIAS AO FINAL DO ESTADO NOVO

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Political History

In the beginning, all history was political. The most important historians worked on this variant, but the field experienced a tumultuous existence. Having occupied a central space in the way of thinking about the past, especially from the 19th century onwards, traditional political history later fell into disuse, being marginalised, rejected, and condemned by the emerging canons as unscientific, despite its proponents initially claiming scientific validity for this field of study. By the end of the 1980s, a resurgence of political history occurred, which was particularly evident in the historiography of continental Europe. Political history became modernised and was transformed into a "New Political History" as a direct result of changes in the prevailing historiographic paradigms influenced by the ideological debate following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union. The enhancement of the genre was primarily due to the decline of Marxism as a philosophy of interpreting historical phenomena, and to the recognition of the inadequacies and limitations of the structural analyses deriving thereof, which had been favoured by the hitherto dominant "Annales School" and its followers. These scholars preferred to focus on the collective and the actions of large social masses, leaving little room for the affirmation of the individual as the true driver of history. Some exceptions, such as the case of Lucien Febvre, who wrote several historical biographies, including that of Martin Luther, confirm the rule. As a result of this renewed appreciation for the role of humans as the principal subjects of action and as a reaction against serial history, from the 1990s onwards, both Portugal and other contexts witnessed a "return to the event" and the rehabilitation of politics by the scholars of the time, especially concerning the contemporary period, similar to developments in France. This was, after all, another episode in the classic historiographical conflict between the primacy of the group and the assertion of the individual, or, in other words, between the dominance of structure and the supremacy of action. More recently, the fragmentation of historical studies has again relativised the importance of political history in the international context, as well as in Portugal. This entire evolution never dispensed with the debate on the various epistemological perspectives, and this is the proposed journey to be explored in the following pages.

Following the proposed trajectory, traditional political history may be highlighted as the privileged realm of historical writing; in other words, political history was history, and history featured as the central discipline in



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the study of society. Historians such as Leopold von Ranke (1795–1886), Fustel de Coulanges (1830–1889), and William Stubbs (1825–1901) emerged from this period. The first was considered one of the founding fathers of "Scientific History." Attracted by the allure of primary sources, Ranke valued the role of narrative and human agency in history, unlike the philosophy of history practiced by Friedrich Hegel (1770–1831). The second, although politically distinguished as a conservative and opponent of universal suffrage and the democratisation of political regimes, also advocated a "modern" approach to historical writing. In his opinion, so-called "scientific" history depended on a distancing from present experiences, which was understandable given that the author belonged to a generation still deeply marked by the memory of the terror of the French Revolution and the actions of the Convention during the First Republic. From his perspective, history needed to focus on observation and finding a method based on reading and accumulating documentation. This view marked a substantial change from the historiographical approaches derived from Romanticism, in the vein proposed by Jules Michelet (1798–1874), and aimed to prevent the past from being appropriated by the present. History was based on a "regime of evidence." Similarly, the empiricism advocated by William Stubbs can also be considered.

In an earlier period of intellectual maturation, in particular in the first half of the 18th century, the history written in Portugal was closer to ancient chronicle writing, with no other major concerns than to record the deeds of great institutions or famous personalities, religious congregations, or the University of Coimbra, for example, covering notable events from various reigns. Authors such as Francisco Leitão Ferreira (1667–1735), an active member of the Royal Academy of History, Friar Manuel dos Santos (1672–1748), and José Soares da Silva (1672–1739), who was also a founder of the Royal Academy of History, fall within this scope. Other important figures of this era include António Caetano de Sousa (1674–1759), who worked on the genealogies of the Royal House, and Friar Manuel da Rocha (1676–1744), a medievalist of some merit.

The next generation opened with Pascoal de Melo Freire (1738–1798), considered one of the founders of history of law in Portugal, with António Caetano do Amaral (1747–1819) following the same path by studying the history of legislation, with excursions into medieval patristics. In the meantime, João Pedro Ribeiro (1758–1839) came to prominence as the founder of the discipline of palaeography and diplomatics, which he taught, making a notable contribution to the development of subsequent 19th-century historical works. The history of diplomacy also developed from the foundational works of the 2nd Viscount of Santarém, D. Manuel Francisco Mesquita de Macedo Leitão e Carvalhosa (1791–1856), whose political preferences aligned with a faction of Miguelism are also well known. In the field of history of law and legislation, the works of Manuel António Coelho da Rocha (1793–1850) are also noteworthy, as well as the importance of Simão José da Luz Soriano (1802–1891), who became something of an unofficial historian of the emerging liberal regime. Among his vast body of work, the *História do Cerco do Porto* [*History of the Siege of Porto*] (1846–1849), in two volumes, and the exhaustive *História da Guerra Civil e do Estabelecimento do Governo Parlamentar em Portugal* [*History of the Civil War and the Establishment of Parliamentary Government in Portugal*] (1866–1890), in 17 extensive



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volumes, among others, are worthy of mention, with the latter serving as an authentic history of Portugal given the wide chronological scope covered, despite its title. These were the times of the great syntheses of national history.

It was not long before the 19th century bequeathed us with historians who followed this movement at a domestic level. Two of the main ideologues of political liberalism in Portugal helped establish the image of the struggles between the liberals and Miguelists, as well as the emerging revolutionary regime. Almeida Garrett (1799–1854) and Alexandre Herculano (1810–1877) contributed decisively to determining an interpretation of the actions of the victors of the civil war and the regime to which they gave rise. Garrett was primarily celebrated as a playwright and a leading writer of Portuguese romanticism, but his role as an active politician and, above all, as a commentator of the Liberal Revolution greatly contributed to the creation of a series of representations of the political history of his time. Beyond his political historian status, Garrett sought to convey a personal view of the events in which he directly or indirectly participated, and this testimony would influence the generations that followed, offering a valuable perspective on those decisive moments. Almost the same may be said of Alexandre Herculano, with the considerable difference that this historian perfectly embodied the spirit that marked the discipline in his era, both in terms of his conception and his critical method. Among many pioneering works, he was responsible for producing the first major *História de Portugal* [*History of Portugal*] worthy of that title. It was in him that romantic historicism found its great national cultivator.

On another, equally significant level were the contributions of Luís Augusto Rebelo da Silva (1822–1871), who was also responsible for a *História de Portugal dos Séculos XVII e XVIII* [*History of Portugal of the 17th and 18th centuries*] and the first professor of history of the *Curso Superior de Letras*, as well as José Maria Latino Coelho (1825–1891), author of the important *História Política e Militar de Portugal desde os fins do Século XVIII até 1814* [*Political and Military History of Portugal from the late 18th century until 1814*], which was unfinished. Meanwhile, in the history of law field, the works of Henrique da Gama Barros (1833–1925) on administrative history were particularly noteworthy. In a vein that combined erudition and dissemination, Manuel Pinheiro Chagas (1842–1895) also stood out for his controversial historiographical work—much commented on, for example, by Eça de Queirós—but bequeathed us a *História de Portugal* in several volumes, later continued by Barbosa Colen and Alfredo Gallis, where the positivist narrative style imposed itself on the reader.

Indeed, in international terms, as the end of the 19th century approached, the historiographical debate was energised by the opposition between two currents. The positivists were on one side, following Auguste Comte (1798–1857), and on the other the idealists, such as Wilhelm Windelband (1848–1915) and Heinrich Rickert (1863–1936). While the first school assigned the fundamental objectives of trying to discover new facts and eliminate error through historical criticism to historical research, the idealists, especially the Germans, highlighted a clear distinction between history and science. In their view, the historian should rely on intuition as an instrument and method of approaching the past. Thus, historicism, with its idealist roots, asserted itself



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through the distinction it made between the natural sciences and the sciences of the spirit, with History, naturally falling into the latter category. The natural sciences held objective knowledge and its explanation, while the sciences of the spirit stood out for the subjectivity and relativity of the knowledge of nature. Without a clear victor, the debate continued into the 20th century.

In the end, there was a kind of "agreement" between both sides. On methodological and theoretical levels, both currents shared concepts. The historical document was the written document, with textual criticism as the only valid methodology. The historical fact was understood as a unique, singular and fragmented phenomenon—the so-called event. Historical time was linear, continuous and irreversible—the succession of events. Finally, the historical subject was understood as the individual, voluntaristic being, personified by the great figure or hero—the actor of the event. In short, history was understood as a succession of important events, enacted over time by prominent figures. Alternatively, it may be said that history was thus perceived as merely recounting political facts that occurred chronologically and were sometimes linked without causal connection. History was reduced to the purest form of "événementiel."

The rules of historiographical production derived from this were based on two products: the comprehensive national or universal synthesis and the school textbook. The former focused on national entities—the states and their heroes—and aimed to trace the genealogy of the glorious ancestors, of whom their contemporaries were no more than legitimate heirs and continuators. History was approaching the Epic. School textbooks on the other hand, although following the same rationale, were devoid of scholarly apparatus, written on the basis of the cult of the homeland and its prominent figures, highlighting the present, so as to be understood by all. There was a clear recognition here between the sense of belonging to a community—the nation—and the sharing of a common, almost immaculate past, where deviations, thus understood in light of the understanding of former times, were subordinated to the achievements, which deserved to be highlighted since these deeds conferred an identity substrate to the collective.

From this perspective, history fulfilled a function. Beyond the historiographical exercise per se, history politically legitimised the contemporary. If it did not, it would have failed in its role. Thus, it bore this utilitarian character. While the state emerged as the locus of historical change and man, individually and voluntarily, was its subject, history appeared as the succession of great events enacted by great figures. Politically, history fulfilled the task of transmitting the cultural and political values of a people through the study of their past. It was as if there were an umbilical and indissoluble connection between generations, between notable ancestors and their contemporary, proud continuators.

The Portuguese historiographical scene also accompanied this series of transformations and constant shifts within the disciplinary field. The main advocate of a positivist approach to political history in Portugal was Teófilo Braga (1843–1924), a well-known face of republicanism with a particularly engaged public life, having held important positions in the directory of the Portuguese Republican Party and after 1910, as the leader of the provisional government. Among his many works, his *História das Ideias Republicanas em Portugal* [History



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of Republican Ideas in Portugal], written in line with this approach, is particularly noteworthy. In the same vein, José de Arriaga (1848–1921) left valuable contributions on the Revolution of 1820, *Setembrismo*, and the final decades of the Constitutional Monarchy, as also Basílio Teles (1856–1923) who, among his many writings, left us *Do Ultimatum ao 31 de Janeiro (Esboço de História Política)* [*From the Ultimatum to 31 January (Sketch of Political History)*], also written in a tone politically committed to republicanism.

In a different political field, the historiography of Joaquim Pedro de Oliveira Martins (1845–1894) stands polemically against positivism and republicanism. It is based on a synthetic and *a priori* conception of history. Among valuable contributions, this eclectic thinker and political activist bequeathed us a new vision of the *História de Portugal* [History of Portugal] in several volumes, continued by another major work, *Portugal Contemporâneo* [*Contemporary Portugal*], where history is presented in a narrative tone, especially as a “farce,” revealing a highly critical view of the kingdom’s evolution and the ruling elite of the 19th century, which may also be understood as a kind of “reckoning” between the author and his era, which never rewarded him with the importance Oliveira Martins deemed him to have.

This paradigm, oscillating between positivism and traditional political history, would encounter its existential crisis. The changes brought by “modernity” also affected the way history was thought. The rapid economic development imposed on industrialised societies and the consequent multiplication of social conflict eventually replaced the state as the main agent of historical change. At the same time, the advent of mass societies diminished the importance of the individual as the sole subject of history. The progress of the sciences in general, and of the social sciences in particular served to exacerbate the effects of this crisis.

The comparative method of sociology, for example, led to initial attempts to integrate particular facts into a more global context. This path gave rise to the “historical synthesis,” the main drivers of which were names such as Henri Pirenne (1862–1935) and Henri Berr (1863–1954), who began to question the idealist philosophies of history. Berr even proposed integrating the particular into the totality, suggesting the interrelation of facts from a globalising perspective, the goal of which was the pursuit of the synthesis. Thus, the synthesis emerged as a scientific hypothesis that enabled a shift from the descriptive to the explanatory, and from chronology to problematisation.

This approach created disciples. Marc Bloch (1886-1944) and Lucien Febvre (1878-1956) followed Berr's lead. Their main initiative was the celebrated foundation of the “Annales School”, which undertook a broad renewal of historiography by overcoming the ‘événementiel’ and establishing permanent contact with the social sciences. This evolution mainly affected political history. While on the one hand, economic, social, and demographic history benefited from the methodological advances of economics, sociology and demography, on the other hand, political history was not renewed in the same way due to the absence of the constitution of a political science. Political history, therefore, did not accompany the historiographical renewal proposed by the *Annales* and entered a depression from which it would take decades to recover.



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However, the attack on “traditional political history” was not unprecedented. Its challenge first originated in the Marxist world. In Karl Marx's (1818–1883) view, men are the protagonists of history, but according to particular material conditions of production. Thus, it is through the contradiction between “productive forces” and “production relations” that revolutionary situations are created, i.e., that historical change occurs. According to this perspective, it is not representation that determines reality, but the opposite. In other words, political ideas are not what determine economic realities, but the opposite. The successes and failures of the revolutions of 1848 in Europe, the final triumph of conservative forces, and the evolution of capitalist societies led Marx to rethink the role of the individual in history. This author relegated individual voluntarism to the background in favour of the masses, or what he called “social classes,” as the main subject of history. For Marx, history was nothing more than the history of class struggle. On the other hand, through the concept of “mode of production” it was possible to think about the structure, functioning, and dynamics of a social totality. This concept would even be used by non-Marxists, such as Fernand Braudel (1902-1985), who considered Marx to be the first thinker to produce social models based on the long duration of history. After all, the Marxist “mode of production” considered not the isolated fact, but the social totality animated by economic determinism, as if expanding the place of political history to the social whole, while shifting the dynamics of historical change from the political to the economic. The development of Marxist-inspired historiography was fundamental in France and explored by figures such as Jean Jaurés (1859–1914), Albert Mathiez (1874–1932), Georges Lefebvre (1874–1959), and Ernest Labrousse (1895–1988), but it was curiously ignored in Germany (despite its re-elaboration by the so-called “Frankfurt School”) and in the Anglo-Saxon world.

Some innovative theoretical production would be attempted in other geographies such as Italy with Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937) and even in England, through the “New Left,” whose main names after World War II were Eric Hobsbawm (1917–2012) and E. P. Thompson (1924–1993). At the same time, in France, another generation of Marxist-inspired historians emerged, including names such as Georges Duby (1919–1996), Pierre Vilar (1906–2003), and Michelle Vovelle (1933–2018). Under the influence of the *Annales*, social history also developed and gained prominence in Great Britain, especially with the launch of the journal *Past & Present* (1952), and the approaches of historians like Christopher Hill (1912–2003), Lawrence Stone (1919–1999), and Peter Laslett (1915–2001).

As a result of all these changes, a shift of the core of historical study was witnessed, with its transfer from the isolated political event to economic structures, social classes, ideological phenomena, and the collective role of the masses as transformative agents of reality. The political dimension, since it was devalued, was reduced to an epiphenomenon.

The “Annales School”, as a direct heir to the “Synthesis School”, directly criticised traditional political history. It may be said that the “Annales” were born in opposition to political history. In addition to the aforementioned Pirenne and Berr, other thinkers influenced the launch of the “Annales”. In 1903, François Simiand



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(1873-1935) criticised the three idols of the positivist historians: the political, the individual and the chronological, and suggested aligning history with the social sciences.

The first generation of the "Annales" was launched in 1929 by Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre, as mentioned above, in what was the first major systematic paradigm shift in 20th century historiography. It involved a profound renewal of historiographical discourse, but more importantly, it heralded a reflection on the social function of historical science. The "Annales" counterposed an economic and social history against the political idol, a total history against the individual, and against the chronological the plurality of historical times, a concept later developed by Fernand Braudel and to which in Portugal a clear approach was seen with Vitorino Magalhães Godinho (1918-2011), also a follower of this new generation of the "Annales", with his "Complexos Historico- Geográficos" ["Historical-Geographical Complexes"].

Based on the antagonism towards political history, the historical discipline was renewed. All history became social history. History was transformed into a kind of "super science" of the social. At the same time, a new notion of "document" was proposed. Its written and narrative character lost exclusivity. Instead, an approach based on plurality gained prominence. In addition to written testimonies, documents took on a conceptual breadth. Oral, visual, material, statistical, iconographic and cartographic records were now accepted, while the historical fact was regarded as a construction by the historian, acquiring meaning in its relationship with the global. Ultimately, all reflection on the past was a social construct.

Another important implication of this paradigm shift lies in the fact that the broadening of the notion of historical fact implies a change in the notion of historical time. If the singular political fact, which occurs at a dizzying pace, can be considered historical, the same can happen with the demographic, economic, or cultural fact, which is repeated over decades or centuries. The conclusion is that history cannot be change alone but also permanence. Braudel refined the idea. The first duration is short-term (it is the time of the individual, of the event), then medium-term (that of conjunctures, of cyclical oscillations in economic and social History), and finally long-term (of long duration, structures, mentalities, secular amplitude).

The *Annales* claimed a new epistemological status for history—science. As mentioned earlier, there was a shift from "narrative history" to "problem history". In other words, history would no longer recount events as they happened but rather formulate hypotheses to be tested through research in search of an explanation and objective knowledge as in the scientific paradigm. History would assume an explanatory nature, answering the questions posed by the historian. To this end, the starting point of history would not be the fact or the event, but rather the historiographical inquiry, the famous "starting question," for which answers were then sought. In fact, this sense was already present in the term *History* in ancient Greece.

While traditional history followed the logic of the recitative that prioritised political fact, the history of the "Annales" leaned towards the hypothetico-deductive logic. Laws were no longer sought, instead the pursuit of regularities and permanencies. The field previously dominated by kings, heroes, nations, theatres of war, and



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power became populated by economics, sociology, and demography, producing a different historiographical discourse.

As already implied, the “Annales” passed through several generations. The first, as already seen, that of Bloch and Febvre, was committed to producing an economic, social, and civilisational history in pursuit of a total history. The second, that of Braudel, added geo-history and demographic history. The third, the new history generation, was no longer totalising but rather interested in opening previously unknown or less considered frontiers, namely those of the history of mentalities, historical anthropology and sociology, and psychological history. In Portugal, inspired by Vitorino Magalhães Godinho, studies within the scope of historical sociology were undertaken. These studies were closer to the political field, focusing on themes such as the elections, the caciquism phenomenon, the organisation of parliaments, the constitution and evolution of political parties, and the reproduction mechanisms of political elites.

The assessment to be made also had consequences in the field of political history. The variant took on a new function as the historian ceased to provide arguments to the nation or to power, ceased to feed its need for retrospective legitimation to instead provide the means to better understand and manage social reality. The scientific knowledge of social mechanisms should allow for the development of technical solutions not justify political choices. Understood in such manner, the political would not foster penetration into the core of historical reality, as the ideological discourse made political history incompatible with any scientific status.

In the case of Portugal, much of what was produced during the first half of the 20th century was political and military history. A factual, descriptive approach closely tied to the document was adopted. Historicism still prevailed. In terms of assessment, from the mid-1800s until around 1960, there was a predominance of political, military, and institutional history. With different thematic and chronological approaches and varying literary value, the contributions of Damião Peres (1889–1976), coordinator of the famous so-called *História de Portugal* of Barcelos, Paulo Merêa (1889–1977), a leading name in the history of law, and João Ameal (1902–1982), politically engaged with Salazarism, are worthy of mention. Additionally, Joaquim de Carvalho (1892–1958), better known as a cultural historian, is also notable for his collaboration in the *História de Portugal* of Damião Peres (1928–35) and in the *História do Regímen Republicano em Portugal* [*History of the Republican Regime in Portugal*] (1930–1932) (dir. by Luís de Montalvor), where the political perspective was maintained.

Traditional political history continued under siege beyond the pressures of the “Annales”. The structuralist current, also of French origin, further deepened its crisis. The compromise between structuralism and history originated in the early 1970s. The birth of structural history was based on several currents: one inspired by the constantly cited Fernand Braudel, who sought to study the evolution of human society in the long term; another inspired by Michel Foucault (1926–1984), who sought to conceptualise the structures and processes of the shift, giving rise to the notion of discontinuity; yet another of pure structuralist inspiration, more geared towards the analysis of closed corpora (myths, rituals, texts) based on the elaboration of abstract models by authors such as Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908–2009) or Jacques Lacan (1901–1981). This current asserted that linear



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and continuous history made no sense as it proceeds in leaps and mutations, while also denouncing the privileged status of history in Western thought. A fourth current was based on historical anthropology, seeking to dominate the field ranging from material culture to symbolic systems, with Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie (1929) as its main cultivator.

The outcome of the structuralist methods—whether linguistic, semiotic, or psychoanalytic—geared structural history towards fields such as culture, mentalities, historical anthropology and psychoanalytic history, which are notably distant from the political realm. According to this paradigm, only the structural is deemed scientific, thus placing structure at the opposite end of the spectrum from the "event." The political was viewed as the antithesis of science. In the structuralist view of history, the political, singular events, individual facts, and the biographical, in the realm of literary studies, were deemed unnecessary.

The siege of political history did not stop there. Serial history, quantitative history and new economic history extended these critiques. The crisis of 1929 had already drawn attention to the economic phenomenon, and alongside new theories, such as Keynesianism, new approaches to economic history emerged. Ernest Labrousse (1895-1988) was associated with the "Annales," but his studies were more focused on the analysis of statistical series, leading to what Pierre Chaunu (1923-2009) would later term serial history. In the United States, authors such as Simon Kuznets (1901-1985) pioneered a new current that sought complete autonomy from history. This variant distinguished itself through the use of advanced statistical methods, marking the beginning of what became known as quantitative history. In the 1950s, the "New Economic History" emerged in the U.S., which can be simply defined as a discipline focused on studying past economic facts using models tested according to rigorous econometric criteria.

The new economic history emphasised absolute quantification and employed a hypothetical form known as the "counterfactual." Due to its methodology, this approach greatly fascinated historians and impacted political history, which could never achieve such scientific status since it was based on the unique, the singular, and the unrepeatable. Furthermore, the new economic history brought forth two Nobel prizes in economics (awarded to Douglas North and Robert Fogel in 1993), for their innovative research in economic history by applying economic theory and quantitative methods to explain economic and institutional changes. Fogel's work revealed something surprising: in his studies on slavery in the United States, he concluded that the profitability of slave labour could be historically proven, suggesting that economic motives were not the primary cause for its abolition. If slavery in the South was shown to be highly lucrative, why was a violent and deadly civil war waged to end such an institution? In other words, these authors highlighted the limits of economics while underscoring the importance of decision-making factors.

The criticisms against traditional political history were numerous and continued to accumulate. It struggled to withstand the crossfire from Marxism, the *Annales*, structuralism, and the new economic history. After all, it was psychological and ignored social constraints, it focused on the short-term while neglecting the medium and long-term, it was qualitative and disregarded the quantitative, and it was descriptive and narrative, lacking



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analysis and explanation. Finally, as its last "sin", it was deemed ideological rather than scientific. Nevertheless, political history survived. It persisted in the Anglo-Saxon historiographical tradition through prominent figures such as A.J.P. Taylor (1906-1990) and Richard Cobb (1917-1996), illustrious representatives of the Oxford historiography, from where the former was expelled for his controversial interpretations of the origins of World War II, and where the latter established himself as a practitioner of "history from below." The Hispanist Raymond Carr (1919-2015) may also be included in this same vein. All of them wrote a history that was more psychological and inclined to ignore social constraints, focused on the short-term, paying little attention to the medium and long-term. It was a qualitative history that disregarded the quantitative, a descriptive and narrative history that ignored analysis and explanation. Ultimately, it was an ideological and non-scientific history.

Political history mounted a counterattack. A new political history emerged in the 1970s, fuelled by the combination of historical, theoretical, and historiographical factors. Historically, the advent of the "post-industrial" era raised the question of a return to the event. The logic of accumulation—a dominant economic concept in industrialising societies—gave way to post-industrial societies, where control, information technology, and specialised policies across all sectors resulted in a metamorphosis of politics. Theoretically, the dichotomy between a technocratic ideology, which viewed politics as an illusion (subordinating politics), and a legal formalism, which considered everything to be politics (stifling politics by centring it absolutely), was transcended. Finally, on a historiographical level, a new paradigm emerged that fostered the development of new fields, leading to a shift from total history to the fragmentation of the historiographical field.

Some foundational authors of this new political history include Wolfgang Mommsen (1930-2004), Bladine Barret-Kriegle (1943-), Jacques Julliard (1933-), and Williem Piete Blockmans (1945-). The German historian initiated a reflection on the return of political history. In Mommsen's view, the task of political history was to contribute to a rational resolution of political and social issues. Barret-Kriegle, later focused on the concept of the "event." Political history transitioned from being concerned with the "why" to the "how." History became a science of effects rather than causes. Julliard, in turn, emphasised the autonomy of the political (as a social fact) within the context of the birth of political sociology, paving the way for authors such as Seymour Martin Lipset (1922-2006), Raymond Aron (1905-1983), Pierre Bourdieu (1930-2002), and Nicos Poulantzas (1936-1979). All their works were produced in a clear convergence between history, sociology, and politics, embodying the emergence of a new field: political science. An example is the work of Juan Linz (1926–2013), who delved into the distinction between authoritarianism and totalitarianism, already present in the work of Hannah Arendt (1906-1975). With this shift, political history expanded its analytical scope from the institutional study of the state to the social study of power, political facts, political systems, institutional structures, regime functioning, political agents, elite actions, mass participation, reforms, and revolutions. Blockmans even aligned new political history with new economic history by incorporating quantitative methods.



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The main lines of research of the new political history now included the study of the history of electoral sociology, political parties and party families, the analysis of relationships between politics and society (unions, businessmen, military, and political elites), and the examination of the relationship between politics and collective psychology and mentalities (political sociabilities, symbolism, and public opinion). Other areas undergoing renewal include diplomatic history, the new history of international relations, and a new history of law, to which António Manuel Hespanha (1945-2019) was a significant contributor in Portugal, surpassing more institutionalist perspectives of thinkers such as Marcello Caetano (1906-1980). The same is observed with the emergence of a new military history and in the field of the history of ideas, at the intersection of cultural history and political history. In this latter field, José Sebastião da Silva Dias (1916-1994) was a pioneer, leaving a school between Coimbra and Lisbon.

The last quarter of the 20th century was marked by the influence of historians such as Joel Serrão (1919-2008), Jorge Borges de Macedo (1921-1996), Albert Silbert (1915-1996), Vítor de Sá (1921-2003), A. H. de Oliveira Marques (1933-2007), Miriam Halpern Pereira (1937-), and César de Oliveira (1941-1997) who, from diverse perspectives, were noteworthy for the breadth of their methodological, chronological, and thematic proposals. Nevertheless, the analysis of the political phenomenon was always present in their work, whether closely or from a distance, paving the way for the next generation, which would be influenced by a different international context.

From the late 1980s onwards, especially after the fall of the Berlin Wall, although its origins were slightly earlier, a movement emerged advocating a return to the old political history as a critical counterpoint to the afore-mentioned new political history. The primary driver of this "conservative" return was the American historian Gertrude Himmelfarb (1922-2019) with her *The New History and the Old: Critical Essays and Reappraisals* (Harvard University Press, 1987), where she argued that there is only one way to historicise: by narrating political events precisely as they are described and translated by documents. For Himmelfarb, only the political is history, and History in its entirety can only have politics as its object of study. In contrast, the new history had a natural aversion to the field of politics, although its authors essentially spoke the same language. Pierre Nora (1931-) spoke of the "return of the event," Lawrence Stone of narratives, and Jacques Julliard of political history, but this new political history, being too close to sociology and too quantitative, had a particular distaste for politics. The alternative was a return to the narrative, to the description of the succession of events, finding a causal link that unified them. History thus conceived and written, although not fiction, blurred its specificity concerning fiction. Hayden White (1928-2018) contributed to this with his typology of different historiographical discourses as rhetoric in his work *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (1973). It was time to herald the end of history as a social science. However, this current, the drivers of which may be found among us, especially authors such as Vasco Pulido Valente (1941-2020), refused to be identified as neo-positivist. Rather than merely collecting events and seeking answers to the historian's questionnaire, which must necessarily be formulated in the present, it proposed presenting the



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facts as they are recorded in documents, in a sequential and meaningful manner, addressing the morals, ethics, and values of the time. The new narrative would focus on the succession of events, rather than merely isolated incidents. The narrative signalled a return of the arbitrary and subjective, tempered by heuristics and hermeneutics, that is, by a method and an indispensable set of rules. After all, History, as a discipline, in its origin and for centuries, although closely related in its demand for proof, and especially from the late eighteenth century onwards, became autonomous and clearly diverged from literature, oratory, and theology, with this divergence accentuating from the late nineteenth century as a social science.

A more up-to-date assessment would be subject to a variety of evaluations. On the one hand, in recent years, there has been an extreme thematic and epistemological fragmentation of the field of history in the post-modern, or “post-historical,” period, where no unity is detected in the topics chosen for investigation, leading to a History on everything and everyone with no concern for understanding what contributes—or does not contribute—to the advancement of knowledge about past societies. On the other hand, while it is the historian’s task to describe the multiple forms of reality fragmentation, there is simultaneously a genuine democratisation of the subjects selected for research and publication.

The emergence of new topics compels political history to transform itself and seek to extend its analytical perspective to fields that until recently have been almost impenetrable. Examples of these fields include local and regional history, history of the press, gender, education, art, the church, or institutions. Political history will have its future reserved as a means of thinking about human action in space and time.

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