

Culture of Violence:
War-infused Masculinities and
Male Youth Violence in Post-War Croatia

By Mila Tomašić Srdar

Central European University

Undergraduate Studies – BA in Culture, Politics, and Society

Supervisor: Professor Dr. Nadia Al-Bagdadi

Vienna, 2025

Copyright Notice

Copyright © Mila Tomašić Srdar, 2025. Culture of Violence: War-infused Masculinities and Male Youth Violence in Post-War Croatia - This work is licensed under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives (CC BY-NC-ND) 4.0 International license.

Author's Declaration

I, Mila Tomašić Srdar, candidate for the BA degree in Culture, Politics, and Society, declare herewith that the present thesis titled “Culture of Violence: War-infused Masculinities and Male Youth Violence in Post-War Croatia” is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

Vienna, May 26th, 2025

Mila Tomašić Srdar

Abstract

Violence being a marker of masculinity takes its peak form through militarized masculinities. In Croatia, veteran masculinity is the dominant form of masculinity, a bar set high by the men who fought in the Croatian Independence War in the 1990s. This perception of ultimate masculinity has intrinsically tied violence and aggression to manliness. Today's Croatian boys and young men often display violent behaviors, either against each other or those around them, something which is, according to this thesis, deeply influenced by the social dominance of veteran masculinities. This work therefore explores the relationship between violence and masculinity as it pertains to young Croatian men and boys, as well as how the veterans these boys look up to are a deeply troubled portion of the population, and one which makes for deeply flawed role models.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: Male Youth and Violent Masculinity	5
2.1 Overview	5
2.2 Young Men Initiative and Further Data	6
2.3 Significant Influences: Football Ultras	10
2.4 Significant Influences: Masculinity and Violence in Media	12
Chapter 3: Shaping Croatian Masculinity	14
3.1 What Makes a Man?	14
3.2 Hegemony of Veteran Masculinities	15
3.3 Visualization through Branko Schmidt's <i>Metastaze</i>	18
Chapter 4: The <i>Branitelji</i> as Flawed Role Models.....	20
4.1 Veteran Reintegration and Financial Support	20
4.2 Crime & Punishment: Legal Leniency for the <i>Branitelji</i>	22
4.3 Rift from Croatian Society	24
Conclusion.....	26
Bibliography	28

Chapter 1: Introduction

In recent years there has been an increasing awareness of violence amongst two sections of the Croatian population. One is children: bullying and peer violence in schools has become an ongoing conversation in the media as parents and journalists have begun bringing to light the plight of their children and the inaction of school administrations (Delač, 2025). The issue, especially that of peer violence, is one that is predominantly an issue among young boys, presumably because violence and aggression are tolerated in ‘future men’ as markers of their budding masculinity. The other issue of violence has been among a much older group: veterans. A section of the population which is through words celebrated for their heroism and through actions forgotten, there has been a resentment brewing against veterans who commit grave bodily harm, often against women and children, receiving significantly reduced prison sentences due to their status as *branitelj*, or “defender” (Žabec, 2022). The newly shining spotlight that has been pointed at these two issues indicates an increased frustration with incidents of violence, in a country that has for so long been plagued by it in one form or another.

The Republic of Croatia came to be in 1991, when Croatia, along with Slovenia, voted to seek independence from the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, an independence which turned out to be far more difficult to achieve than expected. What followed was the Croatian War of Independence, or as it is known in Croatia, the *Domovinski rat*, the Homeland War. This war lasted from 1991 until 1995, and while it was successful in achieving an independent, whole Croatian republic, it left a deep impact on the collective psyche of the nation, a nation whose people had now been exposed to raid alarms, bomb shelters, flag-wrapped coffins, and the cries of mother’s whose sons would not return. The strongest impact was of course on veterans, men (and women, though their sacrifices are forgotten) who returned to shouts of praise but would soon

come to experience the unpreparedness of the nation to effectively address the psychological complexities of having experienced direct warfare. This would eventually result in a veteran population which is marked by substance-abuse, aggression, violence, and a near-holy status to shield them from any criticism or mentions of perceived areas of possible improvement.

When put alongside the notion of Balkan masculinity, one which already portrays a man as a violent being whose dominance comes largely from sheer physical strength and size, through and affirmations of power through violent displays of said strength, it is not difficult to imagine how the presence of a large veteran population would enshrine violence further into Croatian culture. One way through which this occurred was the development of veteran or militarized masculinity, one which became the hegemonic form of masculinity in the country. There are boys, and then there are men, and above all are veterans, men whose masculinity is not performed to showboat, but was performed to ‘save the nation’, men to whom we owe the existence of our country and our freedom, and who could only have done so due to their ‘manliness’.

This thesis explores the connection between a society where a militarized form of masculinity is dominant over any other, and issues of violence and aggression among young Croatian boys and men. The central hypothesis is that the hegemony of veteran masculinities creates an environment that encourages violence among male youth and reinforces notions of ‘real men’ being men who not only possess the physical capacities to exert strength, but who display that strength through aggression. If a young boy grows up in a society where ‘being a real man’ is his main purpose, and the ‘realist man’ is a warrior, that boy can only achieve parts of that glory by displaying that he could do harm, and that he is willing to. The youth of today’s Croatia has not experienced war. By now, most of that youth has grown up in a Croatia which is a member of NATO, indicating physical, territorial safety, and a member of the EU, indicating economic and

social progress. However, masculinity is a concept shaped not only by current realities, but by past ones as well. Observing older generations of men, those which to a young boy define manhood, especially fathers, grandfathers, role models, a boy does not need to directly experience war to develop a militarized concept of what being a man means. These connections will be made through first exploring the relationship of the Croatian male youth and violence, as well as their perceptions of masculinity. The thesis will then delve into defining and contextualizing the more abstract concept of masculinity, and veteran masculinity in Croatia, before presenting possible issues with using the *branitelji* as role models for today's Croatian boys.

Research regarding topics of masculinity in Croatia, either by foreign or domestic authors, is sparse, as is research about violence among men and youth. There is also an aversion in Croatian culture to any mention of veterans that isn't overtly positive, even if it offers constructive criticism aimed at helping those men move forward. From the research that exists, very few times is there any sort of connection made between veteran masculinities and the masculinity of the youth. Therefore, the gaps in this field are plenty. This thesis aims to bridge the gap between issues of veteran violence and youth violence, claiming that one directly influences the other. Of course, with many gaps in the field, there are limitations to the study. For one, the research about modern Croatian youth and violence used in this thesis has strong variations in time, but the main study used for this data is a report by the Young Men Initiative for Prevention of Gender-Based Violence, published in 2012, with most of its data collected in 2009, sixteen years ago. Another study used to examine young men and their views of masculinity was conducted in 2015, a decade ago. Research about the concept of veteran masculinity in Croatia is also sparse, with much of it coming from a chapter written by Catherine Baker and Heleen Touquet for the book *Masculinities and Queer Perspectives in Transnational Justice*, published in 2024. Baker and Touquet are both

researchers and university lecturers, both focusing on the fields of gender studies and masculinity, both having a special focus on these concepts as they relate to the modern nations that once made-up Yugoslavia.

Though the topic has not proven to be a popular one in the fields of academia, that only leaves more reason to expand on it. Masculinity, war, and violence are all topics which are extremely relevant to modern Croatian culture, shaping how that population perceives the world around them. They are also inextricably intertwined and not addressing them as such is addressing them incompletely.

Chapter 2: Male Youth and Violent Masculinity

2.1 Overview

In an interview in February of 2025, Katarina Dodig Ćurković, a psychiatrist in Osijek, described how, while violence is not something new or recently discovered, there has been a reawakened awareness that aggression and violent behaviour have increasingly been becoming a form of behaviour which the youth consider socially acceptable or even desirable at times (HRT, 2025, February 26th). One of the main pathways through which this has garnered the attention of the Croatian public is through bullying and violence in schools. In May of 2025, Davor Božinović, the Minister of the Interior, reported that between September of 2024 and April of 2025, police across Croatia had received 1.105 reported incidents of peer violence, averaging five reported incidents per day (Delač, 2025). It can safely be assumed that, when considering all the incidents which have not been reported to the police, that number would be much higher. It should also be noted that this only accounts for incidents of peer violence where physical aggression is used, it does not include cases of verbal abuse and cyberbullying. A study done by the Faculty of Education and Rehabilitation Sciences at the University of Zagreb examined 10,000 students across the country, finding that nearly 40% of respondents had witnessed at least one incident of bullying or peer violence in the past four weeks (Mihić, 2024, p.39). The study also found that girls were more often victims of verbal abuse and cyberbullying, while boys were more commonly faced with physical violence and threats of physical violence (Mihić, 2024, p.40). This is in line with other statistics which point to the fact that there is a large discrepancy between the genders in terms of engaging in acts of physical violence – while 12% of male respondents had participated in at least one physical fight in the past four weeks, only 3.4% of girls had done the same (Mihić, 2024, p.40). Another study, conducted by the same researcher but as part of a Zagreb-specific anti-bullying program, talked to 2,000 students from fifteen schools around the city, and found that 28% of 5th

to 8th graders reported being hit or pushed on a regular basis, while between 40% and 50% reported regularly being verbally abused and insulted (Mihić, 2023, p.23).

Croatia is no stranger to violence amongst young men. As will be discussed further in this chapter, one of the prime examples of such violence, and the population's desensitization to it, are football ultras. Croatia's Bad Blue Boys (Dinamo Zagreb supporters) and Torcida (Hajduk Split supporters) are some of the most notorious ultra organizations in Europe, known for their affinity towards violent behaviour, both at home and abroad. Yet, they are not viewed harshly, but are considered integral parts of their respective cities.

With the growing awareness of a normalization of violence amongst children, it is necessary to attempt to visualize the current male youth's mentality around aggression, as well as understand the factors behind it – factors such as the link between violence and masculinity, as well as societal influences, such as the glorification of violence, both through violent organizations (football ultras) and the media, and most importantly, the connection to an overall militarized masculinity in the country.

2.2 Young Men Initiative and Further Data

Unsurprisingly, much like with most matters related to masculinity in Croatia, data attempting to visualize young men's perceptions of masculinity or of violence is sparse and the field remains understudied, especially considering its importance. However, one extremely valuable source in visualizing the perceptions of young Croatian boys on masculinity came from the Young Men Initiative for Prevention of Gender-Based Violence. This project worked with nine schools and more than 2,500 boys across Croatia, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, with most baseline data collected in the late winter of 2009. They found that, in general, the young men

identified heterosexuality, physical strength, honor, success, strong character, participation in masculine activities such as engaging in sports or drinking, sexual virility, and what the men referred to as “not acting like a woman”, meaning lack of cowardice, as some of the characteristics associated with manhood. The study also found that the home and school were the strongest social spaces influencing the notion of masculinity in young men (Young Men Initiative, 2012, p.3).

In terms of their relationship to womanhood, they stereotypically defined “women’s activities” as make-up or gossiping, but many acknowledged that these are not accurate. They also displayed a strong sense of respect for their mothers and sisters, as well as a need to protect them. However, most of the boys studied “felt the need to retain authority over women, although some emphasized shared power” (Young Men Initiative, 2012, p.4). According to some of the participants, this authority sometimes must be exerted through physical violence. While the men “almost unanimously” agreed that violence against women is nearly never justified due to women being weaker, some did not perceive slapping or hitting a woman as violence, but as a last resort form of discipline for when other efforts to assert dominance failed (Young Men Initiative, 2012, p.4).

In their relationship to other kinds of violence, violence amongst peers was highlighted as being most pervasive in their everyday lives, especially in school and on the streets. There is an expectation for a man to join fights to maintain his status as part of the group, and violence against gay men, was often considered as warranted and deserved (Young Men Initiative, 2012, p.4). The men identified exposure to media violence, violence in the home, economic insecurity or joblessness, feelings of inadequacy, expectations of manliness, and alcohol and drugs, as the main causes behind engaging in violence. While men who do not use violence were perceived as “gaining maturity and self-control, and recognition of consequences; seeing verbal responses and

restraint as showing greater strength; and having boundaries to promote self-control”, when discussing the consequences of not using violence, many stated that they would expect to experience “more violence as a consequence, especially among peers” (Young Men Initiative, 2012, p.4). The study also found a significant correlation between having low self-esteem and more frequently engaging in violence (Young Men Initiative, 2012, p.18). Croatia is a society with rigid definition of masculinity where there is little leeway in terms of interpreting one’s own personal manhood. For a young man growing up in such a context, developing high self-esteem is no easy feat. Eventually, it can be expected that a young man will need to resort to using violence in order to receive the masculine perception that should supposedly raise his self-image.

Out of the nine schools in three countries that participated in this study, two were in Zagreb, making up 618 out of 2567 participating students. The study had asked the boys to, among other things, report whether they had engaged in violent behaviors towards other men or towards women in the past three months. The numbers for violence against women or their girlfriends were fairly low: other than the fact that 24% of respondents had admitted to insulting or humiliating their girlfriend or another young woman in that time span (Young Men Initiative, 2012, p.8), when it came to slapping, hitting, punching, or pressuring women to engage in sexual activities, the numbers were all between 3% and 4%. Among those same boys, 41% believed that “there are times when a woman deserves to be slapped”, 12% believed a man can hit his wife if she will not have sex with him, 18% believed women should tolerate violence for the sake of their family unit, 85% said an insult requires defending your honor, even through violence, and 95% stated they are disgusted to see a man acting like a woman (Young Men Initiative, 2012, p.11). However, when it came to violence against other men, these numbers saw an incredible growth. In terms of sexuality-based violence, 19% had participated in physically beating someone for being gay or overly

feminine and 39% had participated in verbal abuse towards someone for those same reasons. 34% of respondents had taken part in a violent act as a part of a group or gang, and in terms of pushing, kicking, punching another young man or boy, the numbers fluctuated between 65% and 71%, and 73% had humiliated another man or boy in that time span (Young Men Initiative, 2012, p.8).

Another research project done on a sample of approximately 1,500 men in Croatia (as well as others in India, Mexico, Chile, Rwanda, and Brazil) found that while Croatia had lower rates of intimate partner violence and sexual violence than the other countries in the study, it had higher levels of participation in other forms of violence: “36% of male respondents (ages 18-59) had participated in a robbery, 18% in fights involving weapons, 18% have been arrested, and 11% own a firearm” (Barker and Pawlak, 2014, p.7). The project also found that in Croatia there was a correlation between gender-inequitable views and committing crimes or acts of violence (Barker et al, 2011, pp.47-48).

A slightly more recent, relevant study was conducted in 2015 by Natko Gereš and published in 2021. In this study Gereš explored the relation between bullying in schools and attitudes towards masculinity. The data was collected in the fall of 2015 and included about 4,200 kids from 22 schools in Zagreb, all in the 10th and 11th grades (Gereš et al, 2021, 3501). Here students were asked about a variety of topics, from their experiences having either suffered or committed bullying, their attitudes towards gender roles, and suicidal ideation, among others. The study found that out of those that had committed acts of bullying, a significantly larger proportion was men (12.7% compared to 5.8% among girls). Interestingly enough, rates of bullying among women were much higher in high schools that are primarily male than those that have a majority female student population (Gereš et al., 2021 p.3504). Additionally, in the section relating to views of masculinity, for every section except “Avoiding femininity”, there was a visible connection

between endorsing traditional norms of masculinity and engaging in bullying, among both boys and girls (Gereš et al, 2020, p.3504). Gereš stated that “endorsement of traditional masculinity norms should be further researched [...] and included in investigations of bullying perpetration, given its association with increased bullying among male and female students” (Gereš et al, 2020, p.3497).

2.3 Significant Influences: Football Ultras

Football culture, and football ultras, have been an integral part of Croatian society for decades, and their influence and impact, especially on male youth, should not be underestimated. Torcida, the ultras of Hajduk Split, were the first ultras in Europe, originating in the 1950s having been inspired by their Brazilian counterparts (Lawson, 2013), but they remain more famous for their fervent support of Hajduk Split and frequent violence, than their origins.

The Croatian ultras - with the exception of NK Zagreb’s White Angels, a little-known, left-wing, antifascist, ultras organization - often come hand-in-hand with neo-Nazi imagery, hate-speech-ridden chants, and general acts of violence and vandalism, occurring wherever a larger group of them may find themselves on game-night. Their statements and actions are deeply influenced by the war, and with general war-infused language. When attempting to articulate the behaviours of these ultras as they relate to masculinity, Andrew Hodges described how “In Hughson’s (2000) discussion of the Bad Blue Boys in Melbourne, Australia, he identified ‘machismo, chauvinism, misogyny, and homophobia’, as what he terms the basis of a male identity. Whilst these ultras do not live in the Balkan region, they were nonetheless influenced by the war situation and certainly by Croatian nationalist ideology – the connections between war participation and hegemonic constructions of masculinity has been extensively discussed”

(Hodges, 2015, p.5). For most Croatian ultras, violence is a crucial aspect of belonging, both in being performed and discussed. “Whilst self-identified hooligans only spend a fraction of their lives engaged in physical violence towards others, they spend a much larger amount of time discussing these acts, and that such discussions are a resource fans use to cement a sense of group belonging” and creating a collective memory among the participants (Hodges, 2015, p.8). Hajduk Split’s Torcida and Dinamo Zagreb’s Bad Blue Boys (BBB) are the country’s most significant ultra organizations as they represent the two largest teams, and have been engaged in a decades-long rivalry. Both Torcida and the Bad Blue Boys regularly engage in violent behaviour under the ruse of supporting their teams. Flares and smoke bombs are common sightings at any football game that has a Croatian ultra in the bleachers, and the number of violent incidents between the ultras and police, Croatian and foreign, as well as other ultras or fans of other clubs, is an ever-growing one (Matić, 2024). A recent internationally publicized case of such violence occurred when 100 Dinamo fans were arrested in Athens when clashes broke out between them and AEK Athens fans, resulting in one of the Athenians being stabbed to death (Reuters, 2023, December 8th).

Yet, both Split and Zagreb seem to have an overall affectionate stance towards the groups. For example, in Zagreb, as much as the population disapproves of the random acts of violence enacted by the Bad Blue Boys, and finds it shameful when they cause a public scandal in a foreign country, they simultaneously remember the positives of the BBB. Much of the sympathy the ultras receive is based in a collective memory of them being among the first ones on the battlefield when the Homeland War began, and importantly, having volunteered to do so. It is not uncommon to have criticism of the Bad Blue Boys be rebuked with mentions of their heroism in the Siege of Vukovar in 1991 (Horvatić, 2022). There are also more recent positive aspects of the ultras: when the 2020 Petrinja Earthquake occurred, the Bad Blue Boys were some of the first to organize aid

to the epicenter and for evacuations within Zagreb, and during the peak of the COVID pandemic, they held triage in overburdened hospitals and created systems through which they would help deliver groceries and other necessities to elderly people and those who were at higher risk if they went outside (Rogulj, 2020) (Simmonds, 2020) (Redžić, 2020). When their city is in trouble, they do act with love for the city. However, the number of violent incidents, the number of destroyed and vandalized small businesses, the number of injuries enacted on people who were never looking for a fight, is much higher than the number of times they proved themselves useful to the city that loves them so much. For a young boy walking the streets of Zagreb, passing mural after mural dedicated to the Bad Blue Boys, identifying his whole city with an ultras group, the example they set means quite a significant amount, and in this case, it is a militarized, hyper-masculine, violent example.

2.4 Significant Influences: Masculinity and Violence in Media

In terms of film, the Croatian film industry is no stranger to violence. Since the late 1990s, many Croatian films, much like Bosnian and Serbian films, have dealt with the issues of masculine identity and the role of violence in said identity. While there has been such a focus on male criminality in West Balkan cinema that some would grant it the moniker of “macho cinema” (Dumančić and Krolo, 2017, p.167), these films have ended up valorizing and romanticizing violence in masculinity. “By utilizing the archetype of the abusive but justifiably enraged macho vigilante, West Balkan filmmakers create a paradox: they maintain that it is impossible to construct a masculine community on the basis of vigilante justice while simultaneously glamorizing violence as a path to cathartic self-realization. Put simply, these films and their creators are chauvinistic despite themselves” (Dumančić and Krolo, 2017, p.167). *Metastaze*, as mentioned in the first

chapter, is a perfect example of this. While on the surface being a film which condemns violent masculinity, at the end of the day it somehow still glamourized it, at least enough to be enjoyable to the men it critiques.

Musically, the current Croatian music scene, mainly in the pop-folk and rock genres, is completely dominated by Marko Perković Thompson, as it has been for years. Thompson, a veteran and musician who rose to fame for the songs he wrote for both soldiers and the general population during the war, is an endlessly controversial figure (Baker and Touquet, 2024, p.208). While multiple of the nation's favourite patriotic songs which can be heard ringing out from the stadiums were made by him, so were various songs which heavily utilize fascist imagery and references from the fascist days of the Independent State of Croatia and the Ustaše. However, for various reasons, he remains among the most popular musicians in the country. As a matter of fact, he recently announced a concert in Zagreb which sold over 280 thousand tickets on the first day of sales, and an approximate half a million in total, breaking the record for most ticket sales for a single paid concert in history (Premec, 2025). Meanwhile, "Thompson's entire oeuvre extols the necessity and inherent goodness of hierarchies: generational, gender, and ethnic; he presents a stable cosmos of rigid ethno-national and patriarchal values" (Dumančić and Krolo, 2017, p.162). Thompson will be discussed further, specifically in relation to his social status as a veteran and a musician for veterans, in the following chapter.

Chapter 3: Shaping Croatian Masculinity

3.1 What Makes a Man?

Defining masculinity in any context is a particularly difficult task, and that is especially the case with Croatian masculinity - one which has been influenced by numerous cultures and geographical regions, leading to a mixture of various stereotypes and standards. It is arguably most influenced by Balkan notions of masculinity, ones known for their macho, chauvinistic, old-fashioned views of masculinity. Professors and sociologists Marko Dumančić and Krešimir Krolo claim that these masculinities are not addressed with enough nuance, and attempt to repair this, stating that “it is necessary to enlarge and add nuance to the perspectives on West Balkan masculinities because not doing so confirms the idea that the Balkans are a museum of masculinity in which ‘physical toughness and violence, sexual conquest and the subordination of women, guns, strong drink and moustaches feature heavily’” (Dumančić and Krolo, 2017, p.156). They choose to observe traditional Balkan masculinity not as “unequivocally antimodern” as it is often portrayed, but as “a masculinity conditioned by the challenges stemming from the post-war and post-socialist transition processes” (Dumančić and Krolo, 2017, p.155). This is a perspective crucial to this thesis, one which analyzes how present-day Croatian masculinities are continuously being shaped by the experiences of war of past generations. However, it ought to be said, the image of a physically tough, violent, moustache-clad man, with a strong liquor in one hand and a cigarette in the other, is not a completely inaccurate image of masculinity in Croatia. Stereotypes are usually founded in some half-truths, and this picture of Balkan men does partially stem from their reality: Balkan masculinity is deeply tied to physical strength and violence, as well as homophobia, consumption of alcohol (among other ‘manly’ activities), and providing for one’s family (Namy et al, 2015, p.207). However, masculinity, high on the social hierarchy, can itself be divided into smaller hierarchies, and in Croatia, no masculinity is considered greater than that of veterans.

3.2 Hegemony of Veteran Masculinities

Veterans have an exceptional status in Croatian society. This is not necessarily negative as their sacrifice is worthy of praise and remembrance. As Marko Soldić perfectly presents it: “the *branitelj* is the potent actor which defended, and thus facilitated the rebirth of Croatia by unselfishly sacrificing on “the altar of the Fatherland”; and as such he is the most important persona in the recent drama of the Croatian people, to which all Croats owe their utmost gratitude and respect. This notion of defensive action also has a profound moral meaning attached to it, for it is difficult to disagree with the necessity and unavoidability of violence in acts of self-defense – the only “legitimate” form of applied violence in the moral universe of modern democratic states” (Soldić, 2009, p.23).

Having fought a war, they are also regarded as the strongest example of men that the country has to offer. Veteran masculinities are notions of “militarized masculinities [...] as veterans’ social identities relate to military ones” and are “shaped by the ‘long and contradictory afterlife’ of past militarized masculinities once veterans have re-entered civilian life” (Baker and Touquet, 2024, p.209). According to Baker and Touquet’s “Croatian Veteran Masculinities and Exclusive Narratives: Points of Identification With the ‘Myth of the Homeland War’ in the 2010s” chapter of *Masculinities and Queer Perspectives in Transnational Justice*, veteran masculinities are both the dominant and hegemonic form of masculinity in contemporary Croatian public culture, and reinforce both an “unequal relationship between men and women... and among masculinities” (Baker and Touquet, 2024, p.209). The chapter by Baker and Touquet explores how proximity to said masculinities has become a political currency for those who themselves do not possess them, be it musicians, politicians, athletes, among other public figures. One poignant example of this is through the culture around athletes, and specifically towards the national football

team, the *Vatreni* (“The Men of Fire”). The pride and joy of the nation due to their successes on the international stage, the *Vatreni* have been described using war-infused language since the era of Franjo Tuđman, when the attitude of athletes as „fighting for the nation on the sports field“ became a popular narrative, one encountered today in nearly every high-level athletic performance representing Croatia (Baker and Touquet, 2024, p.214). Beyond this popular metaphor of sportsmen as warriors, the *Vatreni* further align themselves to the War and veteran masculinities, both through lived experiences and associations with other public figures. The team, as well as the entire Croatian Football Association (HNS) has long been associated with controversial singer Marko Perković Thompson, with his songs often being the unofficial “team anthems” for various large-scale international competitions such as the UEFA European Football Championship or the FIFA World Cup. For some players this musical affinity could be said to stem from lived experiences in the war. Dejan Lovren and team captain Luka Modrić, the latter of which has a uniquely powerful position in Croatian society, are both war refugees, meaning they “embody a generational post-conflict masculinity grounded in experiencing the conflict as boys” (Baker and Touquet, 2024, p.216). They do not need to accentuate their proximity to veteran masculinities as much as others, because both their post-conflict masculinity and veteran masculinities “stem directly from the war and, within the dominant Homeland War narrative’s gender order, are interdependent: the veterans’ generation fought to defend the children’s generation so that boys could grow into men and make a free nation proud” (Baker and Touquet, 2024, p.216). For others, association with musicians such as Thompson, a veteran himself, is a way of positioning themselves closer to veterans. It is also not uncommon to hear football players credit their success on the field to the existence of an independent Croatia and those that protected it, or describing

how the most important jersey they will ever wear is the Croatian one, followed by a statement of gratitude to those that made that jersey's existence possible.

Other examples Baker and Touquet focus on include those of musicians and politicians. They describe how in some cases, such as that of musician and now right-wing politician Miroslav Škoro, “proximity to and fraternity with veterans as embodied in his music and performance have granted him authority to speak on patriotism and politics“ (Baker and Touquet, 2024, p.217), showcasing that if one associates enough with veteran masculinities, they will eventually have earned some of the privileges that come along with that association. Škoro did not fight, nor was he in Croatia for the duration of the war, but through writing patriotic songs both during and after the war, publicly representing veterans' issues, and closely positioning himself near other veterans, such as Thompson, he has managed to raise himself a step closer to their status (Baker and Touquet, 2024, p.218). When Škoro ran in the 2019-2020 Croatian presidential elections, eventually coming in third, his „proximity to military and veteran masculinities was placed directly in competition with the persona of another candidate whose public persona had been defined by proximity to the military sphere, the incumbent president Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović – who had made a 'militarized femininity' part of her public persona, after winning her first term in 2015, by making frequent appearances in Croatian military uniform while visiting bases in Croatia and Afghanistan (Baker and Touquet, 2024, p.220). Former President Grabar-Kitarović had also made efforts to place herself in proximity to veteran masculinity. While she had no veteran background herself, her work with NATO gave her some military legitimacy which was important considering she was the first female commander-in-chief of the country. To make up for the rest, she, much like the football team, associated herself with veteran music, like that of Thompson (Baker and Touquet, 2024, pp.221-222).

Be it through athletes or politicians, it is clear there is a level of social profiteering that can be achieved through association with veterans and militarized masculinity. For young Croatian men, the dominant form of masculinity being the veteran form of it is reinforced by popular culture, by the media, by politicians, by athletes, by every person or concept that could influence him.

3.3 Visualization through Branko Schmidt's *Metastaze*

An efficient way to illustrate the image of a man, and that of a veteran man, as is relevant to this thesis is through one of the most influential films in recent Croatian history, as well as one that by far had the most “shocking and widespread effect on Croatian audiences” (Dumančić and Krolo, 2017, p.172), Branko Schmidt's 2009 film *Metastaze*, or *Metastases*. Originally released as a novel in 2006, the plot centers around four friends in Zagreb, all men in their twenties and thirties, all with various issues, from alcoholism, to beating their girlfriends, drug addiction, violence, and deep-seeded hatred. The movie is a perfect portrayal of masculinity in Croatia, as well as veteran masculinity. It presents the audience with four men, two veterans and two not, all unemployed, all under the thumb of various addictive vices, all violent, and at the end of the day, all unable to act as functioning members of their society. Their days are composed of meeting at a local bar, drinking, yelling, sexually harassing women, threatening other men with violence, and terrorizing their community. When one is told by his parents, with whom, as a ‘real Croatian man’, he lives, that he must find a job, the others mock him, baffled at the idea of working. Every conversation somehow comes back to the war, with the two veterans becoming increasingly hostile and aggressive in the process. As Krolo and Dumančić write “Schmidt elicits images of an unstoppable moral cancer plaguing modern-day Croatia and its metropolis. Maturing in the wake of war, the young men reflect the petty hatreds, violence, prejudices, and ennui hanging over the country like

a disease that spreads with no cure in sight” (Dumančić and Krolo, 2017, p.172). Tamara Kolarić describes the film as being “about the Croatian transition and the ‘lost generation’ of young people who grew up without access to opportunities and stability, into angry, resentful individuals. It focuses on the breakdown of societal values, placing the figures of war veterans within that spectrum” (Kolarić, 2018, p.206).

Much like the film serves as a great portrayal of Croatian masculinity, its reception is equally a reflection of Croatian society. As much as the film shocked the public, as much as it “struck a chord in Croatian society as a reflection of its collective psyche” (Dumančić and Krolo, 2017, p.172), it was not universally accepted as a rejection of such masculinity. Film critic Željko Luketić noted that the film failed to have any meaningful impact on the hooligans it depicts. In fact, those same men approved of the film, enjoyed and promoted it, feeling that “it was an authentic reflection of their lives” (Dumančić and Krolo, 2017, p.173). He argued that *Metastaze* proved so popular because the hooligans depicted in the film “only do those things that the silent majority fantasizes about in private. Instead, however, their children do the very things they not dare to do: beat up women and faggots, hate Serbs, drink beer, fart, fight in the name of their soccer teams, and destroy public property”. In other words, Schmidt documents rather than mortifies” (Dumančić and Krolo, 2017, p.173).

The image of the veteran presented by Schmidt is one that perfectly encapsulates both Croatian standards of masculinity, and the issues faced by veterans which will be discussed in the following chapter. Croatian men are, much like in the film, meant to be loud, aggressive, drunk, and threatening. Once all men in the room fill out all of those requirements, then those who are veterans must stand out as most manly, loudest, drunkest, most aggressive of all.

Chapter 4: The *Branitelji* as Flawed Role Models

4.1 Veteran Reintegration and Financial Support

While the veterans receive their fair share of glory and praise, as well as the *branitelj* status which raises them on a pedestal in Croatian society, they have systemically been failed by the state, which has failed to provide proper care for the trauma they have suffered, nor have significant enough efforts been put into the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) process. As Professor Janine Natalya Clark writes in „Giving Peace a Chance: Croatia's "*Branitelji*" and the Imperative of Reintegration”, at the time of writing in 2013, the disarmament and demobilization processes had not been addressed in any official capacity, and there has been little reintegration. Instead the reinsertion process – the financial and social aids which are meant to serve as temporary assistance before reintegration, a longer process, has been put in place – has become a permanent fixture of veteran treatment. (Clark, 2013, pp.1936-1938). This reinsertion includes benefits such as disability benefits, allowances on housing, taxes, and healthcare, additional benefits for children of veterans, and veteran pensions, which in 2024 were being received by a bit over 130,000 veterans and have been receiving significant increases over the past five years (Kanazir, 2024). Of all the veteran pension recipients, over half received a pension which is more than double that of the average Croatian. The number of recipients has also been steadily increasing, especially after new laws widening the definitions of veterans and their family members were passed in 2017 (Kanazir, 2024). A drawback of such financial policies is that they become easy to rely on and reduce incentive to return to the labor force, leaving many disinterested in finding work. Moreover, “while pensions and invalidity compensation was highly prioritised, reintegration and employment programmes were given little weight” (Soldić, 2014), something which certainly assisted in the number of unemployed veterans in Croatia being approximately 60,000 in 2017 (Index, 2023).

Out of the some 500,000 *branitelji* that participated in the Homeland War, in 2022 only 30,000 had used social services provided for those suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, or PTSD, and 18,000 were using services for those suffering from depression (Polšak Palatinuš, 2024). Meanwhile, 50,000 *branitelji* suffered physical damage greater than 20%, the threshold to be consider a veteran invalid (Šincek, 2017, p.21). While the number of those seeking treatment for PTSD seems low, the Association for Defenders Suffering from PTSD in the Zadar county had organized a public discussion in April of 2023 where they described how they have been seeing rising numbers of people coming to seek treatment, and estimating that most of those suffering from PTSD never sought any support for it (Braniteljski portal, 2023). This is reflected in Clark's study in which she noted that none of the veterans she spoke to self-identified as traumatized, and noted that the head of one of the veterans' associations she spoke to did not find psychological damage relevant, or something that needs to be discussed and treated (Clark, 2013, pp.1948-1949). The lack of seeking support for PTSD is not something uniquely Croatian, and neither is the societal taboo around therapy. Croatian society does have an aversion to concepts of psychological wellness and treatment, and the constant reinforcing of veterans as glorious, brave, and heroic, does not allow for much space to be open about one's issues, or be vulnerable in any way (Clark, 2013, p.1947). It has also been found that more than a third of veterans' wives have suffered secondary traumatic stress. Transgenerational trauma, or the notion of trauma being passed down to one's children, needs more research in this specific context, but there are solid indicators of its presence (Clark, 2013, p.1947). The presence of such a trauma would further explain the influence of veteran masculinities over today's young men: not only is said influence an outside force, but one that can be reinforced by existing yet unacknowledged transgenerational trauma.

One of the worst manifestations of trauma and PTSD is suicide. Unfortunately, it is not an uncommon one among the *branitelji* (Clark, 2013, p.1946). By 2014, there had been 2734 veteran suicides, a number which had grown to 3269 suicides in 2019, five years later. Veterans are the section of the population with the highest suicide rates (Komar and Koić, 2015, p.15) (Rašović, 2019), with there being about one hundred veteran suicides per year since the war ended, according to the figures above.

For both the low rates of seeking psychological care and assistance, as well as the high rates of suicide, a significant factor is the societal pressure to perform one's masculinity. An aspect of the 'toughness' that is expected of Croatian men, much like it is of many men around the world, is a mental toughness to. Men are not encouraged to recognize psychological issues within themselves, nor to ask for help. When it comes to men who have experienced something as deeply traumatic as direct warfare, unfortunately this ignorance to one's psychological needs occasionally results in suicide. Arguably a more worrying side effect, and quite a common one, is that this untreated trauma results in violent acts being enacted upon others, mainly those around the veterans, often women and children, as will be discussed in the following subchapter.

4.2 Crime & Punishment: Legal Leniency for the *Branitelji*

Among the benefits awarded with the veteran status is the unfortunate practice of considering one's time spent in war as an extenuating circumstance and thereby reducing criminal sentences. This has been a controversial issue in the country, especially as it often results in an endangerment of the safety of women and children. In 2022, a 54-year old man who had been molesting his partner's 20-year-old daughter received 2.5 years in prison, below the legal minimum sentence. That same year, a politician received a 2-year sentence for rape, which was then reduced

to 1.5 years. In both of these cases, the reason for reducing the sentence was the *branitelj* status. A year prior, a veteran who had spent a year sexually abusing his 8-year-old stepdaughter had his 14-year sentence reduced to 11 years (Dnevnik.hr, 2022) (Žabec, 2022). Serial rapists, child molesters, domestic abusers, murderers, there is a never-ending slew of such cases spanning decades. Just recently, I had come across a famous Croatian propaganda poster from 1992 (Nazor, 2011, p.122). In it was a famous photograph of a soldier, one that served as a model of the young and handsome Croatian soldier, Petar Dukarić. With one further search, the headlines quickly informed me that in 2018 he stabbed his wife in the chest fifteen times, and received a far too light four-year prison sentence in return, a sentence which had been reduced from the original six years (Jakelić, 2020). Dukarić was, from his youth, placed in a position where he represented an entire generation, one which today's youth still looks up to, and one which was deeply impactful in shaping that youth's perception of masculinity and Croatian identity. That same youth now watches as he is granted lighter judgement for a physical assault and attempted murder, with the excuse for his actions being having lived through a previous experience of violence.

These cases have all proven highly controversial among the media and public. Miro Bulj, a veteran and politician who recently ran for President as head of the *Most* (Bridge) party, made a public statement in October of 2022 when one of the previously mentioned cases was causing a particularly strong scandal, in which he expressed frustration, saying that they did not fight to be a caste which has an allowance for rape (Index, 2022, October 9th). Many other veterans, like much of the population, have expressed a similar sentiment, claiming that after doing such an honorable thing as fighting for your country, to not only dishonor it by committing such an atrocity, but to use veteran status as some sort of permission slip, is deeply against the spirit of everything that

was being fought for, everything the uniform and the defender represent (Index, 2023, October 3rd).

4.3 Rift from Croatian Society

As can be noted from the discussion above, there has been a “gradually ever widening social, political and emotional gap developed between the veterans and the general public. Instead of a warm reconciliation taking place between the heroes and those for whom they had fought, thereby facilitating the successful reintegration of the former soldiers into society; alienation, suspicion and tension came to mark their relation” (Soldić, 2014). This could be a product of various factors. For one, a veterans are deeply political in their function in the country, and are often pandered to by politicians. The additional attention paid to veterans by politicians, such as that described in section 3.2, makes the general population feel they are less of a priority even though they are the majority. Another part of the resentment comes from the financial burden of veteran pensions and benefits, which many consider as never having been meant to be a long-term solution, nor do they see it as a sustainable one. During her site work in Vukovar, Clark noted that in her discussions with citizens, while they did have respect for the *branitelji*, they also expressed dissatisfaction with the system which always favours them, saw the veterans as living too easy of a life, and perceived an “us vs. them” divide, accusing them of isolating themselves (Clark, 2013, p.1939). The spotlight on veteran criminal behaviour in the past years adds to an image of a *branitelj* as someone who was once glorious but is now a burden to the country and people he defended.

It appears the Croatian veterans live in a sort of grey area where they are neither fully hero nor fully undue burden. They are respected, but resented. Baker and Touquet describe, how the

veterans appear to be “caught between the symbolic image of the *branitelj* as national martyr-hero and the material realities of men who have often been left without sufficient care for their service’s physical and psychic consequences and certainly feel they have been left without sufficient recompense” (Baker & Touquet, 2024, p.212). When discussing political manipulation of veterans, Soldić describes how “the *branitelji* has for too long been characterized by a state of limbo [...] largely caused by the inclination of politicians of viewing the veterans as voters who must be curtailed by empty ideological phrases, rather than offered effective and targeted assistance in the arduous task of returning to a life which has become strange and unknown to them. In this never ending state of liminality, the *branitelj* is “no longer classified and not yet classified”, he is “both living and dead”, he is neither soldier nor citizen – in short, his “condition is one of ambiguity and paradox, a confusion of all the customary categories”” (Soldić, 2009, p.26), reinforcing this idea of an unbalanced state of the defenders. Similarly, it could be said that the veterans find themselves caught this in-between in terms of their masculinity: on one hand, they as veterans embody the superior form of masculinity in their society. However, their realities, ones of unemployment, of psychological turmoil, of suicide, their reputations of ‘leeching’ off of the state, are not aligned with standards of masculinity.

Conclusion

The relationship between violence and masculinity where aggression serves as a means of demonstrating, or proving, one's manhood is not a concept unique to Croatia. It is a standard trope in perceiving masculinity across the world and in every country and culture it develops in its own way, shaped by the people and the experiences of that culture. In Croatia, a nation plagued by war, it has come to create a system in which veterans, the men of the battlefield, are the definition of masculinity, of 'Croatian men'. Those that have fought in a war, especially a defensive one, have performed the ultimate performance of masculinity: they displayed bravery, selflessness, physical prowess, survival skills, an ability to protect their territory and their families and communities. For the younger generation, a war is not a common occurrence, it is not something they have experienced – a privilege often not granted to the generations before them. Observing the case of Croatian boys, for whom war is not a reality but it was the reality of their families whom it deeply scarred, it does not seem so unbelievable that perceptions of masculinity – a role often exemplified through older male relatives – would become intertwined with a militarized notion manliness, that of their fathers. Unfortunately, the hegemony of veteran masculinity in Croatia has left little space for constructive, possibly critical discussions relating to veterans. Instead, it has allowed for young men to grow up in a society which tells them that these men, as flawed as any other, are the example they should unconditionally look up to – a title they earned through having been placed in an awful position where they had to survive through violence. The facts that those men were deeply traumatized in the process, that they have high suicide rates, that many engage in domestic violence that they do not receive proper consequences for, are left out of the main narrative. The Croatian male youth, having not been put in a position to engage in warfare, is left without that glorious outlet where masculinity can

be displayed through justifiable violence, but the standard masculinity that is deeply tied to violence remains, and with no battlefield to prove one's manhood on, the boys find other means of displaying aggression instead, mainly through each other.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Barker, Gary & Contreras, Manuel & Heilman, Brian & Singh, Ajay & Verma, Ravi & Nascimento, Marcos. (2011). Initial Results from the International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES). 10.13140/RG.2.1.2218.8646.

“Baseline Research Technical Brief – Country Report: Croatia.” *Young Men Initiative for Prevention of Gender-Based Violence*, 2012.

Gereš, Natko et al. “Bullying and Attitudes Toward Masculinity in Croatian Schools: Behavioral and Emotional Characteristics of Students Who Bully Others.” *Journal of interpersonal violence* vol. 36,7-8, 2021.

Mihić, Josipa et al. “ISTRAŽIVANJE O VRŠNJAČKOM NASILJU NA REPREZENTATIVNOM UZORKU OSNOVNIH I SREDNJIH ŠKOLA KOJIMA JE OSNIVAČ GRAD ZAGREB” pp. 22–28, September 2023. Accessed May 21st, 2025.

Mihić, Josipa, et al. "VRŠNJAČKO NASILJE KOD ADOLESCENATA U HRVATSKOJ." *Ljetopis socijalnog rada*, vol. 31, n. 1, 2024, pp. 30-59.
<https://doi.org/10.3935/ljsr.v31i1.459>. Accessed May 21st, 2025.

Schmidt, Branko, director. *Metastaze* . Telefilm, 2009.

Secondary Sources

Baker, Catherine, and Heleen Touquet. “Croatian Veteran Masculinities and Exclusive Narratives: Points of Identification With the ‘Myth of the Homeland War’ in the 2010s.” *Masculinities and Queer Perspectives in Transnational Justice*, Rutledge, 2024, pp. 208–227.

Barker, Gary, and Piotr Pawlak. *Understanding Young Men and Masculinities in the Balkans: Implications for Health, Development, and Peace*, CARE International, Sept. 2014, care-balkan.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/YMI-Literature-Review-Understanding-Men-and-Masculinities-in-Balkans.pdf.

“Bulj: Zar Smo Se Mi Branitelji Borili Da Budemo Kasta Koja Ima Popust Za Silovanje?” *Index.Hr*, Index.hr, 9 Oct. 2022, www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/bulj-zar-smo-se-mi-branitelji-borili-da-budemo-kasta-koja-ima-popust-za-silovanje/2401852.aspx.

Clark, Janine Natalya. “Giving peace a chance: Croatia’s ‘branitelji’ and the imperative of reintegration.” *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 65, no. 10, Dec. 2013, pp. 1931–1953, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2013.848643>.

- Croatian Soccer Fans Arrested in Violent Clashes in Greece Released on Bail* | Reuters, 8 Dec. 2023, www.reuters.com/world/europe/croatian-soccer-fans-arrested-violent-clashes-greece-released-bail-2023-12-08/.
- Delač, Tomislav. “Božinović: Prosječno Dnevno Oko Pet Slučajeva Maloljetničkog Vršnjačkog Nasilja.” *Večernji.Hr*, Večernji.hr, 6 May 2025, www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/bozinovic-prosjecno-dnevno-ok-pet-slucajeva-maloljetnickog-vrsnjackog-nasilja-1859002.
- Dumančić, Marko, and Krešimir Krolo. “Dehexing Postwar West Balkan Masculinities: The Case of Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia, 1998 to 2015”, Sage Journals, 2017, pp.154-176
- Hodges, A. J. “Violence and Masculinity Amongst Left-wing Ultras in Post-yugoslav Space”. *Sport in Society*, vol. 19, no. 2, Informa UK Limited, 2015, pp. 174–86, doi:10.17613/M6P27P.
- Horvatić, Petar. “Vukovarski Memento: Bad Blue Boysi I Navijači U Obrani Vukovara I Domovine.” *Narod.Hr*, 21 Nov. 2022, narod.hr/hrvatska/vukovarski-memento-bad-blue-boysi-i-navijaci-u-obrani-vukovara-i-domovine.
- Jakelić, Ivana. “Bivši Tigar, Poznat s Antiratnog Plakata s G N’ R, Osuđen Na Šest Godina Zatvora.” *Večernji.Hr*, Večernji.hr, 1 July 2020, www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/bivsi-tigar-poznat-s-antiratnog-plakata-s-g-n-r-osuden-na-sest-godina-zatvora-1413845.
- “Javna Tribina: PTSP I Dalje U Porastu Među Braniteljima, Vukušić: ‘Uvjeravali Su Me Da Pričam Gluposti Kad Sam Na to Upozorio’ - Braniteljski Portal.” *Braniteljski Portal - Braniteljski Portal*, 28 Apr. 2023, www.braniteljski-portal.hr/javna-tribina-ptsp-i-dalje-u-porastu-medu-braniteljima-vukusic-uvjeravali-su-me-da-pricam-gluposti-kad-sam-na-to-upozorio.
- Kanazir, Ana. “Dvije Kategorije Branitelja: Jedni Dobivaju Malo Više Od Prosječne Mirovine, a Drugi Itekako Profitiraju.” *Mirovina.Hr*, 18 Nov. 2024, www.mirovina.hr/mirovine/dvije-kategorije-branitelja-jedni-dobivaju-malo-vise-od-prosjecne-mirovine-a-drugi-itekako-profitiraju/.
- Kolarić, Tamara. “Hidden Dialogues with the Past: Cinema and Memory of the ‘Homeland War.’” *Central European University*, 2018.
- Komar, Zoran, and Elvira Koić. “Samoubojstva Hrvatskih Branitelja U Zagrebu I Hrvatskoj”, grad Zagreb, Gradski Ured za Branitelje , 2015, www.zagreb.hr/UserDocsImages/arhiva/branitelji/PUBLIKACIJA_Samoubojstva_hrvatskih_branitelja_u_Zagrebu_i_Hrvatskoj.pdf.
- Lawson, Alex. “Hajduk Split Torcida: Trailblazers across Europe.” *World Soccer*, 10 Apr. 2013, www.worldsoccer.com/world-soccer-latest/hajduk-split-torcida-trailblazers-across-europe-340032.

- Luketić, Željko. 2009. "Metastaze - Branko Schmidt." *Dnevni Kulturni Info*, April 8, 2009. Accessed April 28, 2025. http://www.dnevnikulturni.info/recenzije/film/2134/metastaze_-_branko_schmidt.
- Matić, Srećko. "Are Croatian Hooligans Really Right-Wing Extremists? ." *Dw.Com*, Deutsche Welle, 19 June 2024, www.dw.com/en/euro-2024-does-croatia-have-a-problem-with-right-wing-extremist-hooligans/a-69411580.
- "Medved: Oko 60.000 Branitelja Je Nezaposleno. Povećat Ćemo Im Naknadu." *Index.Hr*, Index.hr, 6 July 2023, www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/medved-oko-60000-branitelja-je-nezaposleno-povecat-cemo-im-naknadu/2477320.aspx.
- Namy, Sophie et al. "Changing what it means to 'become a man': participants' reflections on a school-based programme to redefine masculinity in the Balkans." *Culture, health & sexuality* vol. 17 Suppl 2,sup2 (2015): 206-22. doi:10.1080/13691058.2015.1070434
- Nazor, Ante. "The Greater Serbian Aggression on Croatia in the 1990s" *Hrvatski memorijalno-dokumentacijski centar Domovinskog rata*, 2011, pp. 122
- Perasović, Benjamin, et al. "Covid-19 and the Mobilization of Ultras in Croatia: From Hooligans to Community Heroes and Back?" *Sport and the Pandemic: Perspectives on Covid-19s Impact on the Sport Industry*, Routledge , 2022, pp. 207–216.
- Polšak Palatinuš, Vlatka. "Novi Podaci: Preminulo 6330 Branitelja; Poznato I Koliko IH Pati Od PTSP-a I Depresije." *Narod.Hr*, 5 Jan. 2024, narod.hr/hrvatska/novi-podaci-preminulo-6330-branitelja-poznato-i-koliko-ih-pati-od-ptsp-a-i-depresije.
- Premec, Tina. "Thompson Srušio Rekord, Koncert Na Hipodromu Je Najprodavaniji Na Svijetu: Pogledajte Vrtoglavu Cifru Koja Je Okrenuta u Samo Jednom Danu!" *Jutarnji List*, Jutarnji List, 30 Mar. 2025, www.jutarnji.hr/scena/domace-zvijezde/thompson-srusio-rekord-koncert-na-hipodromu-je-najprodavaniji-na-svijetu-pogledajte-vrtoglavu-cifru-koja-je-okrenuta-u-samo-jednom-danu-15568415.
- Rašović, Renata. "Suicidi Branitelja Više Nisu Vijest, Nego Društvena Pošast." *Večernji.Hr*, Večernji.hr, 25 Sept. 2019, www.vecernji.hr/vijesti/suicidi-branitelja-vise-nisu-vijest-nego-drustvena-posast-1347684.
- Redžić, Dea. "Slika Koja Je Oduševila Hrvatsku: Bad Blue Boysi Spašavaju Inkubatore Iz Rodilišta." *Index.Hr*, Index.hr, 22 Mar. 2020, www.index.hr/sport/clanak/slika-koja-je-odusevila-hrvatsku-bad-blue-boysi-spasavaju-inkubatore-iz-rodilista/2167682.aspx.
- Rogulj, Daniela. "Bad Blue Boys Embark on New Campaign: Zagreb Needs Us All." *Total Croatia*, 24 Mar. 2020, total-croatia-news.com/news/sport/bad-blue-boys/.

“Učinkovitost Liječenja Branitelja S PTSP-Om.” *Tematske Mreže Branitelji*, tematskemreze-branitelji.hr/images/smjer/UINKOVITOST_LIJEENJA_BRANITELJA_S_PTSP-om.pdf. Accessed 6 May 2025.

Simmonds, Lauren. “Bad Blue Boys and Torcida Clean Petrinja Ruins throughout Night.” *Total Croatia*, 30 Dec. 2020, total-croatia-news.com/news/bad-blue-boys-2/.

Soldić, Marko. “A Land Fit for Heroes: Croatian Veterans of the Homeland War.” *A Land Fit for Heroes: Croatian Veterans of the Homeland War*, University of Oslo, University Of Oslo, 2009.

“Struka Upozorava: Nasilje Postaje Obrazac Ponašanja Među Mladima.” *Hrvatska Radiotelevizija*, HRT, 26 Feb. 2025, magazin.hrt.hr/mladi/medunarodni-dan-borbe-protiv-vrsnjackog-nasilja-12032832.

Šincek, Stanko. *Posttraumatski Stresni Poremećaj Kod Hrvatskih Branitelja*, University of Zagreb, School of Medicine, 2017, repozitorij.mef.unizg.hr/islandora/object/mef:1650/datastream/PDF/view.

Žabec, Krešimir. “Pedofil, General, Bivši Premijer, Ugostitelj, Silovatelj: Svima Su Smanjene Kazne Jer Su Bili - Branitelji.” *Jutarnji List*, 9 Oct. 2022, www.jutarnji.hr/vijesti/hrvatska/pedofil-general-bivsi-premijer-ugostitelj-silovatelj-svima-su-smanjene-kazne-jer-su-bili-branitelji-15259071.