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Why do History Politics Matter?
The Case of the Estonian Bronze Soldier

PILVI TORSTI

In my earlier work I have developed the various concepts and phenomena related to the presence of history.¹ In this article I attempt to analyse the Estonian Bronze Soldier dispute in spring 2007 as an example of history politics and other phenomena related to the presence of history. Finally I shall close with a discussion of the significance of history politics through analysing the consequences of history politics in Estonia and elsewhere.

THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS IN THE ESTONIAN BRONZE SOLDIER CASE

In 1947, a statue of a bronze soldier was erected in the capital of Estonia, three years after the arrival of Soviet troops and defeat of the Nazis. It was a Soviet war memorial, ‘a Monument to the Liberators of Tallinn’. It was located in a park in central Tallinn above a burial site of Soviet soldiers’ remains, which had been reburied on the site in 1945. In 1964 an eternal flame was placed in front of the monument.

When Estonia re-established its independence in 1991, the theme of liberation, which formed the core of the Soviet approach to history in the Baltic states, was rejected. In this connection, the bronze statue was re-named ‘For Those Fallen in the Second World War’. The eternal flame was put out at the same time and the name of the square was changed from ‘Liberators’ Square’ to Tõnismägi.2

Preparations for relocating the memorial started after clashes at the monument in 2006. In February 2007, the Law on Forbidden Structures (which would have banned the public display of monuments glorifying the Soviet Union or Estonia’s fifty years of Bolshevism, and aimed specifically at the Bronze Soldier) was vetoed by the Estonian President, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, who argued that the bill did not comply with the Estonian constitution.3 Estonian Russians and Russia voiced their disagreement with the bill when it was being discussed in the Parliament.4

According to the latest census (2000) ethnic Russians form 26 per cent of the Estonian population. Based on a 2006 estimation, about one third of Estonia’s Russian speakers are Estonian citizens, another third have Russian citizenship, and around nine per cent are of undefined citizenship. The Estonian population, which made up 82 per cent of the country in 1934, had decreased to 62 per cent by 1991 as a result of mass deportations of ethnic Estonians during the Soviet era, together with migration into Estonia from other parts of the Soviet Union.5 In the 2000 census the figure was 68 per cent.6

The job of relocating the statue and the remains of the buried soldiers in the Defence Forces Cemetery of Tallinn finally started in April 2007, 2 Helsingin Sanomat (HS), Aljosan lähtöä Tallinnasta edelsi vuoden kestänyt riita. 28 Apr. 2007.


4 HS, 28 Apr. 2007.

5 After the Russian population the biggest ex-Soviet single groups in 2000 were Ukrainians (2%) and Belorussians (1%).

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just some two weeks before Victory Day on 9 May, the most important annual celebration of Estonian Russians. The celebration was to take place by the statue. Before the relocation the remains of the soldiers were exhumed and identified, and their families were given an opportunity to reclaim the remains and bury them elsewhere if they so wished. In the absence of the law vetoed by president Ilves, the relocation was based on a different law, which allowed the Estonian authorities to place the remains of the buried soldiers and the statue in a less controversial location outside the centre of Tallinn. The remains of Red Army soldier were an essential factor if the Estonian authorities were to have a legal basis for removing the statue. The precise time of the relocation of the statue and the graves was not announced in advance. The process started when the authorities covered the statue with a tent and encircled the park surrounding the statue with riot fences on 26 April.7

Relocation of the statue and related activities led to controversy in particular between Russia and Estonia and internally between Estonian Russians and other Estonians. The Estonian embassy in Moscow was besieged for a week and violent riots continued in Tallinn for two nights, resulting in extensive coverage in the media and international attention.

The diplomatic relationship between Russia and Estonia has generally been problematic after Estonia claimed independence. Major disputes in recent years have included the borderline dispute between the two countries and the planned building of a gas pipe between Russia and Germany. Journalists have described Russia’s relations with Estonia and its neighbouring Baltic state Latvia as ‘freezing’, and characterised by ‘difficulties in agreeing on any minor or major issue’.8


CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK:

HISTORICAL CULTURE AND HISTORICAL CONSCIOUSNESS
IN THE SERVICE OF HISTORY POLITICS

*Historical culture* presents a form of relating to the past that is open to all the people in a society. Thus, in contrast to academic historical research, it is not a professional relation with the past, but a relation expressed through the daily culture of a society. History culture is considered that part of the culture in which people face the past and try to come to terms with it: the arena/forum for the use of history. It includes mechanisms and avenues where knowledge about the past can be produced, transmitted, presented, used and experienced within a society. A list of examples for avenues of historical culture includes books, cartoons, videos, films, novels, museum presentations, contemporary political debates, political practises, historical exhibitions, television, personal histories, theatre, tourism, advertising, monuments, buildings and so forth.

Typically all the definitions understand historical culture as having a many-sided nature and appearance within the society. Crucially important is the understanding that historical culture exists within society in several forms as part of the culture, and that historical culture emerges through a group of channels, from state approved memorials and curricula to the sphere of cultural institutions, architecture and mass consumption.

Although we define historical culture as ‘the forum/arena where history can be used’, it is important to emphasize that the idea of ‘using history’ here serves only as a tool for understanding, not as a condition.

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9 Historical culture (Geschichtskultur) as a concept became part of the history discussions in Germany in the 1980s, and therefore the German interpretation of its content has been very influential.

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for historical culture. Historical culture appears as a collective concept for all kinds of products and narratives through which history exists in the daily culture, regardless of whether one can detect active and intentional attempts ‘to use history’. The product-nature of historical culture is essential; we are talking about usable cultural products and commonly held stories (e.g. myths) of the society or smaller groups, which embody the historical culture of a society.

Historical culture can of course be analysed in different ways. We can be interested in different forms of historical culture, which seem central in different societies, or in changes in historical culture over time.

Definitions of historical consciousness (historische Bewusstsein), have varied among scholars within Europe. The most commonly held definition among German and Scandinavian scholars\(^\text{11}\) has characterised historical consciousness as ‘a complex connection of interpretations of the past, perceptions of the present and expectations of the future’\(^\text{12}\). Following this definition, Sirkka Ahonen has described historical consciousness as ‘the rational way in which humans are connected with temporality’ thus echoing the modern understanding of time\(^\text{13}\). Historical consciousness can help one orientate oneself in time; knowing and understanding the past can help one comprehend the present and influence future expectations. Thus historical consciousness is the way people and communities deal with the past in order to understand the present and future. Historical consciousness links the past and the future, and can construct a sense of continuity.

Analysing historical consciousness and its dimensions can be seen as cognitive history research which attempts to understand the mechanics of history politics and the meanings people attach to various aspects of the past.

This leads us to the third concept, History politics (Geschichtspolitik), which is the key concept of this article. Habermas introduced the concept\(^\text{11}\) See for example J. Rüsen, Historische Orientierung: über die Arbeit des Geschichtsbewusstseins, sich in der Zeit zurechtzufinden. Köln: Böhlau 1994; G. Schneider (ed.), Geschichtsbewusstsein und historisch-politisches Lernen. Pfaffenweiler: Centaurus 1988.


13 Ahonen, ‘Historiakulttuuri, historiantutkimus ja nuorten historiatietoisuus’.
to refer to those conservative historians who in his opinion had used their professional skills, knowledge and positions for political interests when attempting to explain Nazi Germany not as part of ‘normal’ German history, but as an ‘Asian act’ which followed Stalin’s persecutions.14

In my earlier works I have relied on the definition of history politics that emphasizes its active and conscious nature; the use of history for certain purposes is intentional, history is used for certain purposes. History politics is about using the results of history research, commonly held ideas and conceptions of history or products of historical culture to support and legitimise certain arguments and aims in the current situation. History politics is not a form of relating to the past but rather a societal phenomenon characterised by the interests and aims that direct the use of history in a society.15

In relation to historical culture and historical consciousness, history politics can be understood as a second level category, which makes use of different forms of relating to history because of political interests and purposes.16 This leads to the idea that in a way history politics is based on a conscious or unconscious understanding of historical consciousness as something that a) can be influenced (ie. through historical culture) and b) can be appealed to, for example, for political purposes.

Producing historical culture is history politics in the same way as producing curricula is education politics. In an open society history politics can be practised not only by authorities in the form of school textbooks, museums and monuments, but also by such actors as journalists or non-governmental associations.

Finally, the interest in history politics is related to goals that seem to direct it. In his recent work Hentilä has further developed the idea of the intentionality of history politics by stating that history can be used to support political structures even without the actors’ awareness of using

16 Torsti, Divergent Stories, 53.
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history as part of their arguments. In such cases, intentionality is a hidden yet relevant subject for analysis.\cite{17}

**Significance of the Bronze Soldier as Part of Historical Culture and Historical Consciousness**

The Bronze Soldier in Estonia is a classic product of the *historical culture* constructed by the previous regime. Even after the regime change it has continued to form an arena or forum where history is being displayed. The importance of the Bronze Soldier monument as a historical cultural product for the Russian-speaking Estonians and in particular for the World War II Red Army war veterans is demonstrated through its use as a place for celebrating historically significant dates. The celebration of Victory Day on 9 May and Liberation of Tallinn Day on 22 September have gathered war veterans displaying other products of historical culture, namely Soviet flags and symbols.\cite{18}

A competing historical culture has also appeared at the monument. A non-violent group of Estonians with flags and other Estonian symbols approached the celebrating Red Army veterans on 9 May 2006. Police led the Estonian group away but the angry comments among the public continued, with threats to blow up the monument unless authorities removed it.\cite{19}

Thus the statue debate in Estonia provides a good example of the dynamics between history politics, historical culture and historical consciousness. In this case the Bronze Soldier statue and the Victory Day celebration, both important products of historical culture, were subject to a political decision officially aimed at lessening possible tensions at the site of the statue. But the decision was also a clear message from the Estonian authorities as to who presently controls historical culture.

Here we can note the law vetoed by President Ilves, which would have allowed for the removal of all visible history culture from the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \cite{17} Hentilä, *Harppi-Saksan haarukassa*, 307.
  \item \cite{19} Several articles in the Estonian newspaper Postimees. Quoted in *Wikipedia*.
\end{itemize}
Soviet era. This act of President Ilves also demonstrates the importance of control in relation to historical culture. Historical culture can also be evaluated. For example, historical culture in Germany has been evaluated as open and able to handle its difficult and painful past. Such openness can be considered as one of the fundamental conditions for democratic development, and the greater the stability of a democracy, the more critical, open and permissive the historical culture. Such a historical culture is also able to tolerate disagreements and conflicts.20 Clearly, the historical culture has not been open in Estonia as regards the Bronze Soldier dispute.

From the point of view of historical consciousness we can look at the Bronze Soldier case as an example in which the parallel between past and present thinking can be observed among both Estonian Russians and ethnic Estonians.

As noted, the Bronze Soldier has significant symbolic value to Estonia’s community of ethnic Russians. In regard to the past, it symbolises the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany. The Russian-speaking population views Estonia’s annexation to the Soviet Union as a legitimate process connected to the defeat of Nazism by the Red army. This is based on the official position of the Russian federation.21 In regard to the present, the statue symbolises Estonian Russians’ claim to rights in Estonia, in particular to language rights and their right to live in Estonia as descendants of those who liberated the country from fascism. Past and present thinking are thus interconnected.22

On the other hand, many Estonians consider the Bronze Soldier a symbol of Soviet occupation and repression. In terms of the present

21 Since Russian-speakers do not have their own television channels in Estonia it is also quite understandable that they continue to form their political views on the basis of official Russian positions as communicated through the Russian media, which they continue to follow. K. Kunnas, Ei mitään voiton päivää, Helsingin Sanomat (HS), 6 May 2007.
day attitudes of Estonians, many commentators saw the relocation of the statue as a demonstration of the unwillingness of Estonians to allow Russians to integrate and assimilate into Estonian society.\(^{23}\)

In both cases we can also note Braembussche’s definition of historical consciousness, which is slightly different and more critical than the simple notion of historical consciousness as describing the connection between past, present and future. Braembussche has namely emphasised the role of the present in his definitions of historical consciousness; people are reminded of past experience through its presence in the current situation. Historical consciousness may also illustrate how an individual or a community attempts to deal with the past in the current situation. For Braembussche, a historical experience is about attempting to reconstruct the past, while historical consciousness constructs the past because of the present. Thus historical consciousness ‘forgets’ parts of the historical experience. This forgetting can lead to historical traumas when people are faced with a difficult situation (e.g. the holocaust). According to Braembussche, historical consciousness should not ‘forget’ possible traumas but instead work them out. If historical traumas are not worked out, the memory of the traumas has a tendency to become mythical and an object of taboo formation.\(^ {24}\)

In the case of Estonia there seems to be the danger of such historical consciousness being prevalent among both major groups of the society. Ethnic Estonians focus on the independent Estonian state, and consider the past Soviet occupation as the anti-image (and Estonian Russians as part of it). They sometimes fail to see that Russians in Estonia were also victims of the system brought to Estonia as part of Soviet politics. On the other hand, Estonian Russians, in order to defend their right to exist in Estonia, focus their past-related thinking on the victory of the Soviets over the Nazis, a commonly acknowledged enemy, and fail to acknowledge the need to reconsider the Soviet version of the history of World War II.\(^ {25}\)

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23 Ibid.


An opinion poll gives us further information about the attitudes of Estonians towards the Bronze Soldier dispute and differences between the groups within the society. The poll conducted 5-22 April 2007 showed that 37 per cent of the population supported the relocation of the monument while 49 per cent were against it and 14 per cent had not formed opinion on the subject. Forty-nine per cent of Estonian speakers and only nine per cent of Russian speakers supported the relocation.26

INTERNAL HISTORY POLITICS:
THE RUSSIAN SS-CAMPAIGN AND ESTONIAN RESPONSE

History politics is an overall concept that can be seen to include historical culture and historical consciousness. History politics can attempt to influence the kind of historical culture that is created or destroyed. Relocation of the Bronze Soldier in itself is naturally an intentional act, and as such history politics whose object is the product of historical culture, namely the statue. In the case of historical consciousness we can see, for example, Russian television as making history politics and thereby attempting to influence the historical consciousness of Estonian Russians.

In the following I have collected public statements and comments on the Estonian Bronze Statue dispute. The selection is not exhaustive. It is based on the collection available on Wikipedia in August 2007, as well as on articles I collected during the dispute. It serves to demonstrate how different history-political motives can be observed in the comments of various countries and communities.

The major history-political campaign was carried out in the Russian media. Allegations against Estonia of fascism, glorification of the collaboration with Nazi Germany, glorification of Nazism, resurrection of Nazism and pro-Nazism came from official Russian spokesmen, religious leaders and associations.27

bb.co.uk >. 28 Aug. 2007.
26 Wikipedia.
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For example, the Federation Council of Russia approved a statement which urged the Russian authorities to take the ‘toughest possible measures’ against Estonia: The dismantling of the monument on the eve of Victory Day on 9 May was ‘just one aspect of the policy, disastrous for Estonians, being conducted by provincial zealots of Nazism,’ … ‘These admirers of Nazism forget that politicians come and go, while the peoples in neighbouring countries are neighbours for eternity. The dismantling of the monument and the mockery of the remains of the fallen soldiers is just more evidence of the vengeful policy toward Russians living in Estonia and toward Russia’.\(^\text{28}\) Thus we can see direct references to the present situation using the past as part of the argument.

History politics was also practiced on Youtube, where a number of video clips filmed with cell phone cameras appeared under the keyword eSStonia. The clips mainly supported the claims of police brutality during the riots.\(^\text{29}\) According to an Estonian newspaper most of the clips were mislabeled, thus serving as mere propaganda in trying to present the recorded incidents as evidence for anti-rioters’ brutal violence.\(^\text{30}\)

The Russian Ambassador to Estonia, Nikolay Uspensky, declined an invitation to attend the reburial of the exhumed remains of those soldiers buried at the time when the Bronze Soldier was erected, who had not been claimed by their families. The Ambassador claimed, again referring to history, that his non-attendance was an ‘expression of Russians highest-level disapproval of the removal of the monument, the exhumation, and the accompanying attempts to revise history to suit the political conjuncture’.\(^\text{31}\)

Russia’s chief rabbi Berl Lazar, who conducted one of the reburials of the soldiers buried at the site, denounced all statements describing blaming memorial violence on Russia. 1 May 2007. [http://www.telegraph.co.uk].


the Soviet soldiers as occupants and called on the Estonian authorities to review their position regarding the reburial of the remains of Soviet soldiers in Tallinn. Making direct parallels between past and present and thus appealing to the historical consciousness of people, he said that ‘when Nazism unfortunately rears its ugly head in Europe today and as there have been attempts to deny the Holocaust, Estonia is acting in a manner that insults memory, which alarms us’, adding that ‘the Jewish people will always regard what the Soviet soldiers did as a heroic feat’.32

The Russian Congress of Jewish Religious Organizations and Associations (KEROOR) also issued a history political statement criticizing the Estonian government for relocating a Soviet WWII memorial in Tallinn and for alleged Nazi sympathies: ‘The demonstratively defiant form in which the Estonian authorities have dismantled the Monument to the Liberator Warrior and are relocating the nearby grave of soldiers who gave their lives fighting fascism is not an accidental or spontaneous act,’ the KEROOR said. ‘Estonian authorities prefer to gloss over the fact that punitive detachments and the Estonian SS legion killed between 120,000 and 140,000 Russians, Jews, Ukrainians, Belarussians, Gypsies, and people of other ethnic groups during 1941-1944.’33

The Estonian side attempted to undermine the historical arguments of Russia and Russians and focused its on hooliganism. President Ilves stated that ‘All this had nothing to do with the inviolability of graves or keeping alive the memory of men fallen in the Second World War….The common denominator of last night’s criminals was not their nationality, but their desire to riot, vandalize and plunder’.34 Prime Minister Andrus Ansip said in a televised address in Estonian and in Russian that the memory of dead soldiers was not served when ‘a picture of a drunk shoplifter is being shown all over the world.’35

HISTORY POLITICS FROM OUTSIDE: VIEWS FROM OTHER COUNTRIES

Ex-Soviet countries echoed the statements of Russia and Estonia in their statements and comments, which all used history to support the arguments. The President of the Republic of Lithuania, Valdas Adamkus, announced that Lithuania was concerned and following the events in Tallinn. The President expressed his full support for Estonia, appealing to history: ‘There is no doubt that respect should be shown to the memory of the fallen soldiers. However, the Soviet Army didn’t bring freedom to the Baltic states, so can we blame Estonia if the Soviet soldiers’ remains from a central Tallinn square are reinterred in another cemetery?’.

On the other hand, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus defended the sentiments of Estonian Russians by referring to the historical suffering of Belarus in the Second World War: ‘Belarus is the country that lost every third of its citizens during the Second World War. Any outrage upon the memory of the victims of that war causes us the sentiments of deep indignation and regret. .... We regret that the Estonian leadership has failed to have enough political wisdom not to fight the dead.’

The Tajik Council of War Veterans condemned the removal of the statue, making a history-political claim that ‘Estonian bureaucrats are behaving like fascists’ and the Kyrgyz Parliament condemned the dismantling of the monument, calling it ‘an act against history.’

Representatives of the EU and Nordic countries provided statements that mainly supported Estonia. At the time of the Bronze Soldier dispute the EU Parliament adopted a formal resolution criticizing Russia’s human rights record. In the related debate, history was used to demonstrate the strong and united support for Estonia. ‘Today, we are all Estonians’, stated Joseph Daul, the leader of the biggest European party, EPP-DE, echoing John F. Kennedy’s famous phrase in 1963, when he visited

West Berlin shortly after East Germany had erected the Berlin wall. Interestingly, however, a different comment was given by the former German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder, who stated that ‘the way Estonia is dealing with the memory of young Russian soldiers who lost their lives in the fight against fascism is in bad taste and irreverent.’

Statements by the Nordic countries echoed their historical relations with Estonia and Russia and their foreign policies in general. Carl Bildt, minister of foreign affairs in Sweden, said that what was happening in Estonia was an internal matter and that the outcome formed an intricate part of Estonia’s independence. He said he had faith in the Estonians to sort it out and that he believed it to be important that they did so themselves, without international interference. Carl Bildt also pointed out that he understood why the popular reaction about the statue had been so ‘sharp’. Finnish Prime Minister Matti Vanhanen followed suit but put more emphasis on the willingness of the Finnish government to remain neutral than on the importance of local democratic process in Estonia, which was the emphasis of Sweden: ‘Neither Finland nor other countries need to get involved. As they [events] are occurring in an area near Finland, then we will of course keep a very close eye on them [events]…It is not part of international protocol for politicians to request the resignation of a foreign government’s ministry, it just isn’t suitable.’ Jonas Gahr Store, Norway’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, stressed in his announcement the importance that both sides stop the violence and respect each other.

Finally, as a curiosity I include the statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Serbia to demonstrate how a dispute such as the Bronze Soldier case in Estonia enables different actors to voice their own history political

42 Helsingin Sanomat (HS), Vanhanen tyrmää venäläisten vaatimukset Viron hallituksen erosta. 1 May 2007.
43 Aftenposten 27 Apr. 2007. Referred to in Wikipedia.
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views. Here we see Serbia, in its reference to history, as displaying itself along with Germany as the great condemner of Nazi atrocities. The official statement states: ‘The future of Europe is also based on full commitment to the shared and best pages of European history, whereas the victory over nazism and fascism more than half a century ago undoubtedly ranks among those pages deserving lasting admiration among all in Europe and in the world.’ Condemning the unilateral action by Estonian authorities on the eve of 9 May as contrary to this commitment, it continues: ‘The highest respect for such monuments in today’s Germany is noteworthy. We in Serbia shall forever place flowers on the graves of the Red Army soldiers fallen in the battles for the liberation of Serbia and Belgrade from Nazi occupiers. We shall do so also on 9 May this year.’

Why do history politics matter?

History politics matter because we can often observe the concrete consequences of history being used for political purposes. In the exemplary case of this article, the Estonian Bronze Soldier dispute in May 2007, we can itemise at least five types of consequences.

The first, very serious consequence was the violent protests which led to the worst riots and looting Estonia has seen since its independence in 1991. Hundreds of people were arrested and police had to use force to stop the riots that lasted for two nights. Many people were also injured and one person died as a result of the violent riots.

The second consequence was the enormous material losses caused by the riots and looting. According to Edgar Savisaar, the Mayor of Tallinn, the direct losses exceeded 40-50 million Estonian kroons (2.5-3 million euros).

The third consequence was the losses suffered by Estonian businesses as a result of the dispute. In late April 2007, three large Russian supermarket networks, Seventh Continent, Kopeika and Samokhval, banned all Estonian commodities, and in May 2007 Moscow’s mayor,

44 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Serbia. Referred to in Wikipedia.
46 Delfi. Referred to in Wikipedia.
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Yury Luzhkov, proposed to boycott everything related to Estonia for ‘actions taken against the Bronze Soldier Monument and graves of our soldiers’. He said that Russian companies should cut off their relations with partners in Estonia. ‘One should tell our business: stop contacts with Estonia. The country showed its negative, and I would say fascist face,’ the mayor said, adding: ‘No one will be able to re-write history.’

The fourth consequence was related to the EU and foreign policies. The EU-Russia Summit took place some three weeks after the relocation of the Bronze Soldier and related events. The hoped-for cooperation agreement between the EU and Russia was not reached, one of the reasons being the Bronze Soldier dispute in Tallinn, and the willingness of the European Union to show support for its member state Estonia.

The fifth and perhaps most important consequence of this history political dispute was that it revealed underlying social problems. The International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights stated that ‘the riots in Tallinn and other Estonian cities served to highlight remaining problems relating to the integration of the country’s Russian-speaking minority, which constitutes about one third of the 1.4 million residents. Despite a number of important legislative reforms since the first years of independence, this minority is still not officially recognized as a linguistic minority and continues to face discrimination and exclusion in everyday life, thus fostering frustration and resentment among its members. Many Russian-speakers still lack Estonian citizenship, Russian-language education has gradually been reduced and stringent language requirements restrict access to the labor market for Russian-speakers.’

This illustrates the idea about the necessary role of the present situation in regard to interest in the past. In the Estonian case the Russian minority hangs on the historical monument of the Bronze Soldier and its location at least partly because of their present unresolved social problems in the

Estonian society. The important notion here is the idea of the politics of tomorrow: the major dimension of the influence of history is the future and politics and decisions related to it. Taking a somewhat idealistic stance, one had hoped that the events in May 2007 would have led to concrete actions, ‘politics of tomorrow’, concerning the social problems of the Russian-speaking population in Estonia.

More generally we can note the practical consequences of history politics in different parts of the world. History textbook battles in China, Japan and India have led to riots in Gujarat and to attacks on Japanese companies and products in China. The most extreme form of violence, war, can be largely motivated by utilising history politics as part of propaganda. The former Yugoslavia provides sad examples of this. In Poland, but also in other post-socialist countries, history politics has recently led to legislation enabling political purges of those involved in the communist system.

I would conclude by stating that because history politics matters in a very concrete sense in societies, the analysis of history political interests should be seen as one important dimension of historical research. The objects of history political research are the different ideas of history held by individuals and communities and the motives behind those ideas. I would very much agree with the thesis that historical research has a two-level mission: the production of new historical knowledge and the analysis of the history political interests related to that knowledge. Therefore an understanding of the notion of history politics in relation to history research is vital for historians as well as for active citizens of societies.

50 Hentilä, Harppi-Saksan haarukassa, 308–309.
53 Hentilä, Harppi-Saksan haarukassa, 308.