

Institution: Keele University
Unit of Assessment: D30 History
Title of case study: Historical perspectives on political conflict and contemporary terrorism
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Charles Townshend's long-standing research on political violence in the contexts of modern Ireland, the Middle East and the British Empire, has informed public understanding and official policies on issues of crucial importance. In particular, his <i>Terrorism. A Very Short Introduction</i>, drawing on this extensive research, has sold widely and been translated into eight other languages. Its broad impact on public discourse and official practice concerning terrorism is demonstrated by its use in the British Government's CONTEST (counter-terrorism) strategy and in the training of professionals involved with counter-terrorism in the United States. Townshend's work has contributed to educational programmes in Britain and North America, and his expertise on troubling and controversial episodes in modern Ireland has led to service as an advisor to the Irish government.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Since his 1970s studies of the Anglo-Irish war of 1916-21, and on political violence in Ireland more generally, Townshend has elaborated a distinctive approach to terrorism studies. He emphasises that there are no simple definitions of terrorism but that a broader 'process of terror', a contested historical concept, is fundamental to understandings of terrorism. Furthermore, he has insisted on the close inter-relationship between political insurgency and the attitudes and policies of governments. In <i>Making the Peace. Public order and public security in Modern Britain</i> (1993, ref: A), Townshend showed how public order was steadily tightened during the Victorian era and how that process continued into the twentieth century, through legislation such as the Official Secrets, Public Order, Defence of the Realm, and Emergency Powers Acts, responses to the periodic 'crises of order' that were believed to threaten the British state. His argument in this book, that, as a consequence of eroding civil liberties, over-reaction to terrorism poses a greater threat to society than the outrages themselves, has been widely acknowledged in the wake of 9/11 and the 'war on terror'. In this book and subsequent detailed accounts of political violence in Ireland and in the Middle East, Townshend has called for more precise understandings of the way terrorist acts take effect, and a clearer calibration of the threat posed, than has been offered by western governments in recent years.</p> <p>In 'The Culture of Paramilitarism in Ireland' (1995, ref: B), a product of his participation in a Ford Foundation project, Townshend highlighted the multiple tiers of organization that emerged in nineteenth-century Ireland, and traced the links between the "informal terrorist polity and the central conspiratorial revolutionary organization of the later nineteenth century, the Irish Republican Brotherhood" (p. 321). His analysis extended through the terrorist acts and government reprisals of the twentieth century, culminating in the direct British rule of Northern Ireland from 1972. Townshend's analysis again demonstrated the inter-relationships between state policy and the process of terrorism: the conviction that the British-supported state was partisan and illegitimate played into the hands of groups like the IRA.</p> <p>Townshend drew on this extensive research for <i>Terrorism. A Very Short Introduction</i> (2002, ref: F), while later detailed studies have informed the second edition. Townshend's comprehensive account of the 1916 Irish Rebellion (2005, ref: C), supported by a major Leverhulme fellowship, elaborated his findings on the inter-connections between political insurgency and state repression, and illuminated the complex social and political context of the Irish rising. Research on the Palestine Mandate compared with the Irish context reinforced his argument about the counter-productive nature of much military counter-insurgency (ref: D). In <i>When God Made Hell: The British Invasion of Mesopotamia and the Creation of Iraq 1914-1921</i> (ref: E) Townshend analyses a major case of 'mission creep', where vague imperatives (such as 'prestige' and fear of Muslim</p>

opposition) combined with weak control of policy formulation to produce a costly military campaign and a deeply flawed political settlement of doubtful value to Britain. Finally, Townshend provides a trans-national perspective in “Methods which all civilized opinion must condemn”: the League of Nations and international action against terrorism’ (ref: G), which also shows how the official British definition of terrorism has changed over time. In the international debates about the definition of terrorism, Britain was sceptical about the use of the terrorism label by some states to stifle legitimate resistance, in contrast to its more recent approach.

3. References to the research

A: *Making the Peace. Public order and public security in Modern Britain.* Oxford, Oxford University Press 1993. 264pp.

B: ‘The Culture of Paramilitarism in Ireland’, in M. Crenshaw [ed] *Terrorism in Context* (Ford Foundation research project), Pennsylvania State University Press, University Park, PA, 1995, pp.311-51.

C: *Easter 1916: the Irish Rebellion.* London, Allen Lane/Penguin Press, 2005. xxi + 442pp. [paperback edn. 2006]

D: ‘In Aid of the Civil Power: Britain, Ireland and Palestine, 1916 -1948’, in D. Marston and C. Malkasian, eds, *Counter-Insurgency in Modern Warfare.* Oxford, Osprey, 2008, pp. 19-36.

E: *When God Made Hell: the British Invasion of Mesopotamia and the Creation of Iraq 1914-1921.* London, Faber and Faber, 2010. xxiv + 591 pp. [paperback edn. 2011]

F: *Terrorism. A Very Short Introduction.* Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002, 157 pp.; 2011, 2nd edn. 176 pp.

G: “Methods which all civilized opinion must condemn”: the League of Nations and international action against terrorism,’ in Jussi Hahnimäki and Bernhard Blumenau (eds), *An International History of Terrorism*, Routledge, London 2012, pp.34-50.

Selected Grants:

Charles Townshend (PI). ‘The Irish Rebellion 1914-1918’. The Leverhulme Trust Major Research Fellowship. 31/03/2002-30/03/2005. £81,401.

Charles Townshend (PI). ‘The republican counter-state in Ireland, 1919-1923’. The Leverhulme Trust, Research Fellowship. 01/09/2009-28/02/2011. £41,807.

Townshend’s work has been supported by major peer-reviewed grants and issued by prestigious publishers. He has been a Professor at Keele since 1986, and was elected Fellow of the British Academy in 2008.

4. Details of the impact

Professor Townshend was included amongst a list of 300 public intellectuals nominated by the *Observer* in May 2011, demonstrating the extent to which his research expertise on modern political violence is relevant to current dilemmas. This in turn ensures a large readership for his books and regular invitations to advise governments and policy makers. *When God Made Hell* was widely reviewed in military circles. Colonel Alexander Alderson, Director of the British Army’s Stability Operations and Counter-Insurgency Centre, who called it a ‘superb book’, also pointed out that although Townshend ‘skilfully avoids making direct comparisons’ with the 2003 campaign, readers should not [source 1]. A reviewer in the *Australian Army Journal* (2011) stressed the book’s ‘lessons for today’. Townshend is ‘highly regarded’ in Ireland for his exceptional knowledge of the troubled years, 1916-23, and was thus a ‘natural choice’ as one of three members of the academic advisory committee for the Irish Government’s **Military Service Pensions Project**, one of the last and the largest archives from Ireland’s revolutionary period, to be released to the public. The project will make public 300,000 files of applications for pensions for military service in Ireland 1916-23. Townshend’s research is providing historical context and elucidating the significance of the material for both archivists and the general public during Ireland’s forthcoming ‘Decade of Commemoration’ [source 2].

Charles Townshend’s *Terrorism. A Very Short Introduction*, part of an extremely successful series

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and designed for a broad audience, has been a pivotal means through which he has been able to engage a range of non-academic audiences. Its broad impact on **public understanding and** discourse, what might be called its contribution to **'terrorism literacy'**, is indicated by its sales figures and its translations into languages other than English. The first English edition sold 24,000, and the second edition had sold almost 5,000 more by February 2013. Editions in Spanish, German, Italian, Greek, Bosnian, Japanese, Korean and Simplified Chinese have been published [sources 3, 4]. Furthermore, the specific impacts of Townshend's research mediated through his *Very Short Introduction* are demonstrated by its deployment in the following contexts.

Influence on educational programmes:

Townshend's particular insights into the nature of terrorism shape discussions in courses in several disciplines in many higher education institutions in Britain and North America. *Terrorism. A Short Introduction* is a key text, for example, in a philosophy course at the University of Western Ontario, and an education module in New Jersey [sources 5, 6]. British examples include undergraduate modules in Law at Manchester [LAWS30711], Sociology at Kent [SO594], and History at Cambridge [Paper 6, British Political and Constitutional History since 1867]. Beyond Higher Education, Townshend's text has also been used by the **For Action Initiative (FAI)**, a private enterprise in the USA, which seeks 'to raise awareness about the effects of public trauma and terrorism on people, societies, and the world, and to educate teachers and our youth about the history of terrorism, international relations, global security, and domestic and international policies. The FAI seeks to inspire young people to take action—as individuals and as part of their community—and supports efforts that someday might prevent future acts of global terrorism'. As the FAI explains, 'In order for children to feel safe, not vulnerable, for them to understand others and not develop prejudice, and for them to become effective leaders of tomorrow, they need to be taught about the challenges in our world, i.e. terrorism -- the concept, the history, the causes, the consequences.' Charles Townshend's work currently features as a key text in lesson H-UIV-L3, 'Challenges in Enhancing Media Literacy Regarding Global Terrorism' [source 7].

Influencing Policy and Practice:

a) Most significantly, Townshend's expertise has made a significant contribution to the UK Government's **Prevent strategy**, launched in 2007, which sought to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism. Prevent is one of the four strands in the Government's overall counter-terrorism strategy (CONTEST). The Home office confirms that *Terrorism. A Very Short Introduction* is core background reading for civil servants who work on the CONTEST strategy, as 'it provides an invaluable overview of a complex area which is accessible to all levels'. His work is also included as recommended reading for the public order and civil contingency module on the Strategic Command Course which trains police officers aiming to become Assistant Chief Constables or above (College of Policing, formerly the National Police Improvement Agency). Townshend acted as an advisor to the Prevent training programme, providing a crucial historical perspective and highlighting that the greatest hazard inherent in responses to terrorism is the impulse towards imitation, often heightened by official over-reaction. A videoed interview with Townshend was used in training for professionals whose jobs brought them into contact with young and/or vulnerable people, particularly educators, and police officers. The resulting DVD was distributed to universities, and to all local authorities and police authorities in the UK. The Prevent training ran from 2007–2011, and many aspects continue following a review in 2011. The DVD is still used by some police and local authorities and by some universities in their Prevent presentations to staff in contact with young people [source 8].

b) Defence Threat Reduction. Townshend took part in a workshop at the Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence, University of St Andrews in January 2012, part of a programme on 'Terrorist Innovations in Weapons of Mass Effect' sponsored by the US Government's Defence Threat Reduction Agency [DTRA]. This workshop addressed the ways in which terrorist innovation can be understood, predicted and responded to. Together with the Director of the DTRA, David Hamon, Townshend was responsible for summing up the proceedings of the workshop and indicating their policy relevance [source 9].

Impact case study (REF3b)**5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

- 1: *Royal United Services Institute Journal* volume 156 (2011)
- 2: Military Service Pensions Project, An Roinn Cosanta/Department of Defence, Ireland.
- 3: Townshend, C. (2011) *Terrorism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, Oxford. OUP Website contains details of sales figures:
<http://global.oup.com/academic/product/terrorism-a-very-short-introduction-9780199603947;jsessionid=8083D944863FC03EB253D5618B433E2B?cc=gb&lang=en&>
- 4: Oxford University Press
- 5: University of Western Ontario Philosophy 'Terrorism' Course Information:
<http://www.uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/2000/Phil%202083F%20-%20Terrorism%20-%20Fall%202012-1.pdf>
- 6: New Jersey State Terrorism Case Study for Schools, drawing on Townshend's text:
<http://www.state.nj.us/education/holocaust/911/curriculum/hsu4.pdf>
- 7: For Action Initiative, Lesson H-UIV-L3, 'Challenges in Enhancing Media Literacy Regarding Global Terrorism': <http://www.foractioninitiative.org/lesson-h-uiv-l3>
- 8: Home Office
- 9: Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence