

Institution: Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU)		
Unit of Assessment: UoA 28 (History)		
Title of case study: ICS28.02_The contribution of history to processes of reconciliation in contemporary Northern Ireland		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2000-2019		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Professor Thomas Hennessey	Professor of Modern British and Irish History	01/09/1998 - present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: October 2013 - 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>Hennessey's research focuses on understanding the underlying historical context and issues of identity, culture and ideology that shaped the Northern Ireland (NI) conflict and policy frameworks of successive UK and Irish governments to resolve the 'Troubles'. This research has benefitted public officials and political parties and made an overall contribution to processes of reconciliation and conflict resolution in NI. Specifically, it has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resulted in a significant policy shift on legacy issues by the DUP, who now recognise the importance of historical analysis in 'dealing with the past' in post-conflict NI; • Provided historical context to inform the inquest into the 1974 IRA bombings in Birmingham; • Informed policy debate and thinking on key cultural issues via membership of the Northern Ireland Commission on Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition (FICT); • Contributed to the restoration of devolution in NI in 2020 via influence on the <i>New Decade, New Approach</i> document; • Influenced understanding and decision making within the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and Ulster Unionist Party (UUP), by bringing new insights into party identity and attitudes of membership on key issues. 		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>Northern Ireland (NI) is a divided society dealing with the legacy of a 30-year conflict. Despite the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement, there continues to be significant disagreements related to cultural identities and 'dealing with the past' (the legacy of violence and the role played by the British state's security forces and sub-state paramilitary organisations). Victims and survivors seek justice in understanding events; while others are concerned with what they see as an attempt to 'rewrite history'. Added to this are perceptions of a 'culture war' where British and Irish national/cultural identities vie for supremacy. The implications of this are demonstrated by the collapse of power-sharing in 2017, which partly resulted from distrust over legacy and cultural issues such as an Irish Language Act.</p> <p>The majority of research into divisions in post-conflict NI is from a social science perspective. Until recently Historians were excluded from processes of reconciliation, with debate dominated by disciplines such as transitional justice, which seeks to apportion blame and prioritise reparations through legalistic frameworks. Hennessey's research aims to address this, examining the ways in which cultural identity and historical context have shaped conflict in NI and policy frameworks of successive UK and Irish governments. He contributes to a holistic view of the conflict, acknowledging multi-narratives, rather than privileging one communities' interpretation of past events over another. Alongside this, he examines community identity and intercommunal relations in NI, locating cultural differences as a long-term source of conflict and exploring the role this plays in group identity and its impact on attempts to maintain peace.</p> <p><i>Northern Ireland: The Origins of the Troubles</i> (2005) [3.1] traces events leading to the 'Troubles' in 1968 and culminates in 1970 with the Provisional IRA going to war against the British state. The first substantial research in this area based on primary sources, it disputes that the NI state apparatus sought to punish political dissension by coercion. Instead, it demonstrates how micro-</p>		

incidents, in a charged environment, were interpreted as an attack on one community or another, escalating violence and resulting in loss of state control. It also showed how intercommunal relations were more complicated than generally perceived, challenging the stereotype that ethno-national identity was fixed into British-Irish polarity. Additionally, it locates cultural traditions, for example flying of national flags, as a long-standing source of division. *The Evolution of the Troubles 1970-72* (2007) [3.2] explores the evolution from confrontation between the Unionist and Nationalist communities, to a conflict between the British state and the Provisional IRA. It challenges perceptions around incidents: The Falls Road Curfew (1970), internment without trial (1971), and Bloody Sunday (1972), which have been characterised as a product of a more coercive policy by the recently elected Conservative Government. Using declassified primary sources, Hennessey shows that the new Government was committed to the previous Labour Government's reforms to end Catholic alienation, but paramilitary violence produced a greater security response. Here historical context demonstrates that policy makers responded to the dynamic security situation rather than a premeditated strategy of coercion.

The First Northern Ireland Peace Process: Power-sharing, Sunningdale and the IRA 1972-76 (2016) [3.3] and *The Northern Ireland Peace Process. Ending the Troubles?* (2000) [3.4], examines two apparently similar peace processes 20 years apart. Both works challenge the narrative that engagement in a dialogue between opposing political actors is the key to resolving conflict. Hennessey demonstrated context was vital to understanding why protagonists were unable to conclude a lasting agreement in the 1970s but were successful in doing so in the 1990s, despite both agreements containing similar elements. The research also challenged interpretations that Sunningdale and Good Friday were essentially the same, showing that the former was an embryonic all-Ireland government, and the latter contained a consultative cross-border body with no potential to evolve into an all-Ireland government.

The Democratic Unionist Party: From Protest to Power (2014) [3.5] and *The Ulster Unionist Party. Country Before Party?* (2019) [3.6] are two monographs produced with colleagues from the Universities of Bath, Huddersfield, Liverpool and Ulster, funded by the Leverhulme Trust and the British Academy respectively. Based on comprehensive membership surveys of the DUP and UUP, the team were the first to have access to the membership of the DUP and UUP. As Principal Investigator (UUP project) and Co-Investigator (DUP project), Hennessey contributed historical analysis of both parties (including their roles in the NI peace process). Research brought new insights into the religious, national and cultural identity of the parties membership, attitudes to issues such as same-sex marriage and abortion, and feelings in relation to the constitutional position in NI.

3. References to the research

3.1 Hennessey, T. (2005) *Northern Ireland: The Origins of the Troubles*. [Authored Book] Dublin: Gill & Macmillan. ISBN 0717133826. Submitted RAE 2008. CCCU on request.

3.2 Hennessey, T. (2007) *The Evolution of the Troubles 1970-72*. [Authored Book] Dublin: Irish Academic Press. ISBN 9780716528845. Submitted RAE 2008. CCCU on request.

3.3 Hennessey, T. (2016) *The First Northern Ireland Peace Process: Power-Sharing, Sunningdale and the IRA Ceasefires, 1972–76*. [Authored Book] London: Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN 9781137277176. Submitted REF2.

3.4 Hennessey, T. (2000) *The Northern Ireland Peace Process. Ending the Troubles?* [Authored Book] London: Palgrave MacMillan. ISBN 0717129462. Submitted RAE 2001. CCCU on request.

3.5 Tonge, J, Braniff, M. Hennessey, T. McAuley, J.W. & Whiting, S.A. (2014) *The Democratic Unionist Party: From Protest to Power*. [Authored Book] Oxford: Oxford University Press. ISBN 9780198705772. Shortlisted for the Practical Political Book of the Year, Paddy Power Book Awards 2015; winner of the Political Studies Association Brian Farrell Prize for Best Politics Book 2015. Submitted REF2.

3.6 Hennessey, T. Braniff, M. McAuley, J.W. Tonge, J. & Whiting, S.A. (2019) *The Ulster Unionist Party: Country Before Party?* [Authored Book] Oxford: Oxford University Press. ISBN 9780198794387. Submitted REF2.

Associated grants

Tonge, J. (PI) University of Liverpool. Hennessey (CoI). *A Membership Survey of the Democratic Unionist Party in Northern Ireland*. Leverhulme Trust Research Project Grant. 2012-2014. £88,296.

Hennessey, T. (PI) CCCU. *A Membership Survey of the Ulster Unionist Party in Northern Ireland*. BA/Leverhulme Small Research Grant. 2015-2016. £9,932.

4. Details of the impact

Hennessey's body of research examining the ways in which cultural identity and historical context have shaped conflict in Northern Ireland, and the policy frameworks of successive UK and Irish governments, has had the following impacts:

Resulted in a significant policy shift on legacy issues by the DUP, who now recognise the importance of historical analysis in 'dealing with the past' in post-conflict NI. In 2013, Hennessey was a founder member of Arkiv (with social scientists Professor Arthur Aughey, Dr Maire Braniff, Dr Cillian McGrattan (all Ulster University) and historian Dr Simon Prince (CCCU)). Reflecting Hennessey's body of work, this cross-community group were concerned that the past of NI was being approached solely through a legalistic framework, without historical context. In October 2013, Arkiv submitted a response (co-authored by Hennessey) to the Panel of Parties in the NI Executive (with Richard Haass and Meghan O'Sullivan as Chair and Vice Chair) [5.1], who were tasked with making recommendations on issues including the past, parades and protests, symbols and emblems, and flags. Arkiv called for a role for historians in addressing legacy issues in the form of a 'commission of historical clarification' which would recognise multi-narratives and contextualise events. An Historical Clarification Commission (HCC) was included in the Panel's resulting recommendations until the penultimate draft, when it was replaced by a watered-down Historic Timeline Group [5.2]. The subsequent 2014 Stormont House Agreement (SHA) made provision for an historic timeline, with no historical analysis or contextualisation.

Hennessey, with colleagues from Arkiv, continued to call for the establishment of an HCC (potentially through a revised Historic Timeline Group). Additionally, they argued that the Arts and Humanities Research Council should have a role in commissioning and overseeing SHA's proposed academic studies, alongside the Economic and Social Research Council, with both proposals detailed in their written submission to the NI Select Committee in June 2018 [5.3]. Between 2015-18 they held a series of meetings with the Northern Ireland Office (NIO) and NI political parties (including the DUP) at which they advocated for a role for historians in the SHA bodies. This engagement led to a significant policy shift within the DUP who changed a key position on legacy issues to recognise for the first time the importance of historical analysis and contextualisation in 'dealing with the past'. In a letter to Hennessey, the Rt Hon Arlene Foster MLA, First Minister of NI and Leader of the DUP, writes that the DUP accepted the benefits of a 'professional historical approach' in providing 'an authoritative evidence-based account of the period to provide fairness and accuracy.' They suggested that this could be achieved through an enhanced Historic Timeline Group or via a separate body. In addition, they agreed 'the Arts and Humanities Research Council should have a role in commissioning and overseeing the Stormont House Agreement proposed academic studies.' [5.4a] These recommendations were included in the DUP's submission to the NIO consultation on *Addressing the Legacy of Northern Ireland's Past* in 2018 [5.5] and a more detailed policy paper then under preparation [5.4a].

Informed the inquest into the 1974 IRA bombings in Birmingham. Hennessey's appointment as Historical Advisor to the inquest on the 1974 IRA bombings in Birmingham further demonstrates the contribution of historical context to addressing legacy issues. The bombings represented the deadliest terrorist attack on British soil until 7/7, with 21 people losing their lives and a further 220 injured, with the inquest following years of campaigning by the families of the victims. Hennessey was appointed as Historical Advisor on the basis of his published work, and his role entailed identifying the bombings in their historical context and attribution of the attacks for the Coroner and the Jury. In 2018, Hennessey delivered a report

which drew on insights in relation to republicanism developed since 2000 and more specifically, analysis undertaken for [3.3]. It provided background to the origins of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) campaign in mainland Britain, the ideology of the Republican Movement 1919-1974, and details of the IRA campaign in the West Midlands and Great Britain [5.6]. Submitted in evidence to the Coroner, this report, alongside Hennessey's evidence to the Jury (March 2018), contextualising events which took place nearly half a century ago. The Coroner Sir Peter Thornton QC credits the 'significant work' carried out by Hennessey and highlights the 'great benefit' to the inquest of setting the Birmingham bombings in their 'rightful historical context' to gain insights into the circumstances surrounding the IRA's bombing campaign in the West Midlands in the 1970s [5.7].

Influenced policy debate and thinking on key cultural issues in NI via membership of the Commission on Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition (FICT). In June 2016, Hennessey was appointed as an independent representative to the Commission on Flags, Identity, Culture, and Tradition (FICT). Arising from the SHA recommendations, FICT's remit was to seek consensus on issues related to flags and emblems and broader issues of identity, culture and tradition. Of 15 commissioners, Hennessey was the only historian in the group, and his contribution was underpinned by insights relating to cultural conflict and community identity, particularly drawing on [3.1] and [3.2]. Between June 2016 and December 2018, the commission undertook extensive public engagement across NI society. Hennessey 'played an important role [...] bringing his academic research to bear upon key issues of historical and cultural identity [...] presenting a model of culture and cultural identity in the final report' which included discussion on international law and cultural rights; and authoring chapters on 'Education', 'Language Culture and Heritage', 'Flying Flags on Street Furniture' and 'Memorials, Remembrance and Commemoration' [5.8]. Throughout the process there was a 'constant flow of policy ideas' between the Commission and political parties [5.8], with FICT handing its final report to the First and Deputy First Minister in July 2020.

Contributed to the restoration of devolution in NI in 2020, via influence on the development of the *New Decade, New Approach* document. Work with FICT led to the DUP approaching Hennessey to contribute to policy thinking related to the restoration of Government in NI. Foster confirms that Hennessey's contributions 'helped form the basis of discussion that led to the *New Decade, New Approach* (NDNA) document which restored devolution in Northern Ireland.' [5.4b] Hennessey produced a paper for the DUP, which drew on insights related to identity and culture gleaned through his overall body of research and understandings developed through involvement with FICT. The collapse of power-sharing had in part resulted from distrust over cultural issues, such as an Irish Language Act. Hennessey proposed that significantly raising the profile of cultural rights within Protestant, Unionist, Loyalist (PUL) communities would counteract perceptions of a 'culture war' against British identity. He also outlined the benefits of the positioning of an Ulster-British identity, as opposed to Ulster-Scots, which holds less resonance for PUL communities. Foster confirms that she agreed with Hennessey's 'emphasis that cultural outcomes from negotiations had previously been undervalued', contributing to the belief within the PUL community that a 'culture war' was being waged against British identity. The DUP agreed that 'Ulster-British identity was crucial to understanding how members of the PUL community perceived their cultural identity'. This was then translated to the NDNA document in 'the appointment of a Commissioner to enhance and develop the language, arts and literature associated with the Ulster Scots / Ulster British tradition.' [5.4b] In addition, Foster confirms that Hennessey's contribution on international law and cultural rights in FICT 'was reflected in the NDNA document which seeks to promote public awareness and educational programmes, including guidance on how the rights of a child to learn about their cultural identity and heritage as well as those of other traditions will be incorporated into the education sector.' [5.4b]

Influenced understanding and decision making within the DUP and UUP, by bringing new insights into party identity and attitudes of membership on key issues. Membership surveys for the DUP (2012-2014) and UUP (2015-2016), and subsequent analysis and contextualisation (Hennessey) [3.5] [3.6], have influenced decision making processes within

both parties. UUP Leader Robin Swann MLA wrote to the project team: '[T]he research has proved exceptionally useful in terms of identifying the occupational, gender and denominational make-up of the party. It was also revealing to learn of the memberships' attitudes to cultural issues, social issues, political institutions and other political parties. A benefit of the research is the confirmation from the party membership that there is no appetite for a merger with the DUP [...] it strengthens my view that a merger with the DUP is not in the interests of unionism, because Unionism is a movement.' He continues that the UUP 'are making use of the findings, to effect change, to broaden the appeal of the party to all sections of our community, whatever their religion, class, age or gender background. [...] Based on the results of the research we recognise we have work to do; but it is guiding us also on how the Ulster Unionist Party needs to reflect the diversity of our country.' [5.9] With respect to the influence of the research within the DUP, the DUP's then leader Rt Hon Peter D Robinson MLA in a letter to the project team wrote: 'There has been much benefit from this project. Firstly, the public is more enlightened about the nature of the DUP. Secondly, as a party we have benefitted greatly from the research [...] which have been used to help shape party strategy in a wide range of areas. These include the composition and roles of the membership; the roles of women; key party messages; the attraction of votes from within and beyond the unionist community; relationships with the other political parties and intercommunity relations. [...] In summary, the research into the DUP's membership was not only pioneering; it provided a clear example of academic research making a difference in terms of influencing and shaping political action.' [5.10]

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

5.1 PDF Arkiv's response to the Panel of Parties in the NI Executive.

5.2 Article written by Hennessey in The Newsletter

<https://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/politics/historical-context-missing-sha-legacy-bodies-1144843>

5.3 PDF *Dealing with the Past: Arkiv Submission to the Northern Ireland Select Committee* (2018).

5.4 Testimonial from the First Minister of NI and DUP leader Rt Hon Arlene Foster MLA related to (a) legacy issues and (b) cultural issues.

5.5 PDF DUP's response to Government Consultation on *Addressing the Legacy of Northern Ireland's Past* (2018).

5.6 Testimonial from solicitors Field Fisher in relation to the Birmingham Inquests (1974).

5.7 Testimonial from the Coroner in relation to the Birmingham Inquests (1974).

5.8 Testimonial in relation to contribution to Commission on Flags, Identity, Culture and Tradition (FICT) from The Executive Office.

5.9 Testimonial from Robin Swann, then Leader of the UUP and article in Belfast Telegraph <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/opinion/news-analysis/robin-swann-read-my-lips-there-will-be-no-merger-of-the-uup-and-dup-on-my-watch-37723371.html>, in relation to utilisation of findings from the UUP Membership Survey.

5.10 Testimonial from Rt Hon Peter Robinson then First Minister of Northern Ireland and Leader of DUP in relation to utilisation of findings from the DUP Membership Survey.

PDFs available for all online content