


<b>Section A</b>		
<b>Institution:</b> University of St. Andrews		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> UoA 19: Politics and International Studies		
<b>Title of case study:</b> Commemorating the Great War		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> April 2015 - 2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b> Hew Strachan	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b> Bishop Wardlaw Professor	<b>Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:</b> 01 April 2015 - present
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2016 - 2018		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> N		
<b>Section B</b>		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words)		
<p>The 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Great War inspired global efforts to memorialize its tremendous sacrifices and reflect on how the war changed the course of history. The importance of the centenary prompted Strachan to re-examine core assumptions and historical interpretations of the war and publish a series of outputs reflecting these findings. His new research shed light on how WWI became an intractable and genuinely global conflict, how the very notions of battle and strategy were transformed by the war, and the importance of the American contributions to hastening victory. Facilitated by his leading roles on the Scottish National Committee on the Centenary of the First World War and the UK National Committee for the Centenary of the First World War, Strachan's research findings had a profound impact on the creation of UK memorialization activities—enriching our cultural heritage and shaping understandings of the Great War for generations to come. An estimated 35,000,000 people across the UK participated in these events while millions more around the world watched the live BBC coverage.</p> <p>Specifically, the research findings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helped broaden centenary events to be more inclusive and international, particularly the 2016 commemorations of Jutland and the Somme;</li> <li>• Shaped battle commemorations to span months instead of a single day, especially for the Somme (2016), Passchendaele (2017), and Amiens (2018);</li> <li>• Led to special emphasis being placed on the Anglo-French relationship, culminating in a special event in London in 2018 to mark the centenary of Marshal Foch's appointment of Supreme Allied Commander.</li> <li>• Led to the dedication of specific memorial events recognizing American sacrifices, such as the 2018 commemorations on the Island of Islay to remember the 600 American troops lost in the sinking of the SS Tuscania and HMS Otranto.</li> </ul>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words)		
<p>The underpinning research has been carried out since Strachan joined the University of St. Andrews in 2015, as the Bishop Wardlaw Professor in the School of International Relations. The centenary and the importance of its memorialization prompted Strachan, long a preeminent scholar of the Great War, to re-examine core assumptions and historical interpretations of the war. The requirements to offer advice and deliver lectures, combined with the opportunity to learn from others in the process, prompted him to fundamentally rethink his approaches to a number of issues, particularly those generated by the war's later stages. Because of the intertwined pattern of public engagement with further research and writing, research was developed, presented and refined during commemoration events and then ultimately published.</p>		

Strachan's research sheds new light on how WWI became an intractable and genuinely global conflict, how the very notion of strategy was transformed by the war and the importance of the American contributions to hastening victory.

### (1) How WWI Became an Intractable Global Conflict

Recent historiography had reached a broad consensus that WWI was avoidable—a conflict that could have been averted through cabinet level diplomacy and compromise. Why then did events degenerate so rapidly into an intractable global war of peoples fighting over irreconcilable objectives? Strachan argues that hardened enmities arose as differences in politics, religion, and ideology became grafted onto the idea of the national community—a new phenomenon that had not marked 19th century wars [R1]. This helps us better understand the spiraling nature of WWI—of how societies across the globe found themselves caught up in a great conflagration over what suddenly appeared to be irreconcilable differences, leading to four years of devastation and loss.

### (2) The Transformation of Battle and Strategy during WWI

In the 19th century, strategy was seen as the conduct of military operations—usually the tactical planning that led to decisive battles—a business for the generals and their staffs. WWI, however, changed battles: rather than brief engagements with clear winners, they were stretched over lengthy campaigns of months that produced indecisive results [R2]. This led to a reconceptualization within the strategic studies literature: strategy was now understood as an endeavor to relate the use of war to desired political ends. To this body of strategic thought, Strachan's work adds that fighting the drawn out battles of WWI required the mobilization of whole societies and economies as well as the management of complex alliances and global coordination across multiple fronts. This broadened the notion of strategy even further for leaders at the time, heightening the importance of alliances, especially the Anglo-French relationship in the early stages of the war and the entry of the United States at its denouement. These developments even required new state institutions for their implementation [R3].

### (3) Reinterpreting American Contributions to the War Effort

Previous scholarship argued that the American Expeditionary Force arrived 'too late' to impact the outcome of WWI, leading historians and publics to neglect the contribution of the U.S. Strachan argues that this is a profound mistake. Rather, American entry into the war hastened victory by its immediate effects in 1917: revalidating the legitimacy of the allied war effort as the Russian revolution challenged it; relieving pressure on the Royal Navy from German U-boats; vigorously enforcing the naval blockade of the Central Powers; and providing much needed economic aid [R3, R4].

### **3. References to the research** (indicative maximum of six references)

These publications comprise contributions to noteworthy international collaborations between historians, published as edited volumes in four different countries, that examine our understandings of WWI during its centenary.

[R1] Strachan, Hew. 2017. "The Ideas of 1914." In Richard Butterwick-Pawlikowski, Quincy Cloet, and Alex Dowdall (eds.), *Breaking Empires, Making Nations? The First World War and the Reforging of Europe*. Warsaw: The College of Europe, Natolin Campus. ISBN: 9788363128227

- Working paper presented at the University of Indiana on 18 April 2015 and at Sydney University on 19 July 2016.

[R2] Strachan, Hew. 2018. "La Rédefinition de la Bataille: Verdun et la Somme," In, Alexandre Lafon (ed.), *Les Batailles de 1916*. Paris: Sorbonne Université Presses. ISBN: 9791023106251

- Working paper initially developed for a conference at the Sorbonne, Paris, commemorating the Western Front battles of 2016, held 22-24 June 2016.

[R3] Strachan, Hew. 2015. "Military Operations and National Policies, 1914-1918." In, Holger Afflerbach (ed.), *The Purpose of the First World War: War Aims and National Strategies*. Oldenbourg: De Gruyter. ISBN: 9783110346220, DOI: [10.1515/9783110443486-004](https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110443486-004).

[R4] Strachan, Hew. 2020. "Londres et Washington: Les Relations Anglo-États-Uniennes Américaines pendant la Première Guerre Mondiale." In, Olivier Forcade and Olivier Chaline (eds.), *L'Engagement des Américains dans la Guerre, 1917-1918: La Fayette, Nous Voilà*. Paris: Sorbonne Université Presses. ISBN: 9791023106664

- Initial ideas delivered during the Commencement Address of the US Naval Postgraduate School on 31 March 2017. Working paper presented at Glasgow University on 10 October 2017, during a conference at the Sorbonne on 23-27 November 2017, and at Strathclyde University on 9 February 2018.

#### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words).

During the centenary of WWI, Strachan's research had a profound influence on the creation of UK commemoration events, which included the participation of tens of thousands of individuals and reached millions of viewers through live television broadcasts [S1]. Strachan's research on the intractable global nature of WWI, the transformations it wrought to battle and strategy, and the importance within this context of American sacrifices thereby shaped broader public understandings of the Great War and enhanced our cultural heritage for generations to come. Specifically, these research findings:

- Broadened centenary events, particularly the 2016 commemorations of Jutland and the Somme, to be more inclusive and international;
- Extended the battle commemorations of the Somme (2016), Passchendaele (2017), and Amiens (2018) to span months instead of a single event;
- Placed special emphasis on the Anglo-French relationship within overall planning for the centenary, culminating in the 2018 London commemoration of Marshal Foch's appointment as Supreme Allied Commander;
- And led to the creation of specific memorial events on the Isle of Islay in 2018 to recognize the sacrifice of 600 American troops who lost their lives when the SS *Tuscania* and HMS *Otranto* sank.

Overall, approximately 35,000,000 people across the UK participated directly in at least one activity of the First World War Centenary Programme with millions more watching the live BBC coverage – 78% of the UK population over 14 years was estimated to be aware of the coverage [S2, pp.ii & 17-18]. Strachan was centrally involved in designing hundreds of commemoration events for this programme, as well as for additional centenary events in France. He served in a leading role on the Scottish National Committee on the Centenary of the First World War (WW100), on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) chairing the 1914-18 Committee, on the UK National Committee for the Centenary of the First World War, and on the corresponding national advisory committee for the French government (Comité Scientifique, Mission du Centenaire de la Première Guerre Mondiale). As attested to by the Prime Minister's Special Representative for the Commemoration of the Centenary of the First World War, "Throughout, he [Strachan] was the government's principal "go-to" historian, a central player in a highly acclaimed national commemorative, diplomatic and pedagogical undertaking that is without precedent" [S3].

Through this influence, Strachan wove his new research findings into particular centenary events, as developed in the examples below. The Vice Chairman of the CWGC notes that, "As one of the world's leading experts on WWI, one would have thought that Sir Hew could rely entirely on his past work, but what impressed me... was the fresh insight he provided based on further research and continuous re-examination of our assumptions about how the war began and the way it was conducted" [S4].

##### (1) Broadening Centenary Events to Be More International and Inclusive

Strachan's research on the inherently global nature of the Great War [R1] helped broaden UK planning for the centenary to be more inclusive and international. Commemorations for Jutland

on Orkney (31 May 2016) included the British Prime Minister and the German President, as well as other dignitaries, naval representatives, and military bands from both nations [S1, pp. 2-3]. Similarly, commemorations for the Somme began with a ceremony at the Thiepval Memorial in France (1 July 2016) led by the French President and members of the British Royal Family, but also inclusive of Canadian participants including the Royal Canadian Artillery brass band [S1, pp. 7-18]. The event was attended by over 10,000 people and aired on BBC2 with 1,190,000 viewers [S1, pp. 19-20]. The Vice Chairman of the CWGC attests that: "*There had perhaps been some unease in Government circles about the extent to which Commonwealth nations should participate, possibly fearing accusations that Britain was still acting 'imperially'. It seemed to me that Sir Hew's research and briefings on the international nature of the war helped to allay those concerns. The result for both Jutland and the Somme were two international events watched by tens of millions of people.*" [S4]

## (2) Extending Battle Commemorations to Span Months

As Chair of the 1914-18 Committee of the CWGC, Strachan was directly involved in planning the centenaries of the battles of the British empire, including Jutland (2016), the Somme (2016), Passchendaele (2017), and Amiens (2018)—all of which were UK official events—as well as Arras (2017) which was specifically marked by the Scottish government. These events stressed Strachan's new research findings on the transformation of battle into lengthy and indecisive engagements [R2]. To recognize the extraordinary duration of these battles, and properly memorialize the sacrifices they entailed, commemorations were explicitly designed to span months—particularly on the Somme, which ultimately involved 80 separate events between July and November 2016 [S5]. The Chair of the Scottish Commemorations Panel corroborates that "*The Centenary Commemorations of the Battles of the Somme [2016], of Passchendaele [2017] and of Amiens [2018] all had the mark somewhere, nationally and internationally and throughout, of Sir Hew's remarkable and highly esteemed scholarship on how a lengthy campaign over months produced such a modest result, and he was frequently consulted thereon.*" [R2, S6]

## (3) Placing Special Emphasis on the Anglo-French Relationship

Moreover, Strachan's research findings on how such lengthy battles broadened notions of strategy, heightening the importance of alliances [R3], led to special emphasis being placed on the Anglo-French relationship within overall planning for the centenary. Indeed, Strachan served as a bridge between the UK and French planning committees, coordinating approaches and creating special recognition for the alliance on both sides of the channel. These efforts culminated in a special event, held in London on 26 March 2018, to recognize and remember Marshal Foch, the French military leader appointed Supreme Allied Commander of the war effort [S7]. As the Prime Minister's Special Representative attests, "*I think it is true to say that the UK's special efforts with the centenary of the battle of Amiens in 2018 in that city and the event in London [2018] to mark the centenary of Marshal Foch's appointment as Supreme Allied Commander early that year would have struggled without Sir Hew's influence and his stress on the importance of the Anglo-French relationship to Entente strategy. They were both warmly received in France.*" [S3]

## (4) Memorializing American Sacrifices

Strachan's research on American entry into the war and their importance in hastening victory [R3, R4] shaped centenary planning through the creation of specific memorial events dedicated to American sacrifices. For example, "*Mention must also be made of the Centenary Commemorations on the Isle of Islay of the loss of SS Tuscania and HMS Otranto in February 1918 and October 1918 respectively, with the combined loss of over 600 American troops on their way to fight in Europe. This was an opportunity to reflect Sir Hew's research by recognizing the contributions of the United States to the war's outcome. The Islanders of Islay... went to remarkable lengths to bury and then exhume the bodies of those young Americans for their subsequent repatriation.*" [S6] The 2018 commemoration was attended by HRH The Princess

Royal and the US Ambassador to the United Kingdom, among other dignitaries, with ships of four national navies lying symbolically offshore **[S8, S9]**.

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of ten references)

**[S1]** Summary attendance and viewership data for sample WWI Commemoration events referenced in the impact narrative

**[S2]** UK Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, “First World War Centenary Programme: Legacy Evaluation”

**[S3]** Letter from the Prime Minister’s Special Representative for the Commemoration of the Centenary of the First World War

**[S4]** Letter from the Vice Admiral (retired) of the Royal Navy and Vice Chairman of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

**[S5]** Programme of the Somme Commemoration events

**[S6]** Letter from the Chair of the Scottish Commemorations Panel

**[S7]** HM Government, “The Centenary of the Appointment of Marshal Foch as Supreme Allied Commander”

**[S8]** Argyll and Bute Council, ‘Argyll and Bute Remembers: Islay—SS Tuscania and HMS Otranto’

**[S9]** Media coverage of the Isle of Islay commemorations