

Commemoration or celebration? The centenary of the First World War

Professor Sir Hew Strachan



7.30 p.m. 7th January 2015

Biography

*Hew Strachan has been Chichele Professor of the History of War at the University of Oxford and a Fellow of All Souls College since 2002, and was Director of the Oxford Programme on the Changing Character of War between 2003 and 2012. He also serves on the Strategic Advisory Panel of the Chief of the Defence Staff and on the UK Defence Academy Advisory Board, as well as being a Trustee of the Imperial War Museum, a Commonwealth War Graves Commissioner, and member of both the National Committee for the Centenary of the First World War and the Council of the International Institute for Strategic Studies. He is also a Fellow of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, and Visiting Professor at the University of Glasgow. He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 2003 and awarded an Hon. D. Univ. by the University of Paisley in 2005. In 2010 he chaired a task force on the implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant for the Prime Minister. In 2011 he was the inaugural Humanitas Visiting Professor in War Studies at the University of Cambridge and became a specialist adviser to the Joint Committee on the National Security Strategy. He is Lord Lieutenant for Tweeddale, and a Brigadier in the Queen's Bodyguard for Scotland (Royal Company of Archers). In December 2012, *Foreign Policy* magazine included him in its list of top global thinkers for the year. He was knighted in the 2013 New Year's Honours.*

Abstract

In 2018 the Commemoration of the Centenary of the First World War will reach its climax on 11 November, the anniversary of the Armistice with Germany. It will be a Sunday, and will therefore also be Remembrance Sunday. As a result two responses, potentially in conflict, will coincide that day, one of celebration and one of grief. Our predecessors were able to hold them in tension but we have subordinated the first to the second. How has this come about? What does it tell us about our changing understanding of the war? And can we use it to good effect in our approach to the centenary?