

# Report shows lack of knowledge about World War One's global impact

February 13 2014

---



WW1 soldier

A widespread lack of understanding of the global scale and impact of the First World War has been revealed in a new report. Research by the British Council in the UK and six other countries shows that knowledge of the conflict - which began 100 years ago - is largely limited to the fighting on the Western Front.

University of Exeter historian, Dr Catriona Pennell, acted as historical consultant to the report 'Remember the World as well as the War'. It explores people's perceptions and knowledge about the First World War and highlights the truly global nature of the conflict and its lasting legacy. This links closely with Dr Pennell's various research projects, including the 'First World War in the Classroom', an Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) funded project that seeks to establish how the First World War is taught in English Literature and

History classrooms in England, and will provide the data set that will inform the nature and content of the Institute of Education's WW1 Centenary Battlefield Tours Project.

The report identifies that international perceptions of the UK today are, in part, still influenced by Britain's role in the First World War. In the UK, less than half of the 1,081 people questioned are aware that North America and the Middle East played a part in the war, and less than a quarter are aware that Africa and Asia were involved.

In terms of impact and legacy, while 62% of people in the UK are aware of the war's connection to the rise of the Nazis in Germany, well under half are aware of its link with the rise of Communism in Russia. Less than a third associate the war with the fall of the Ottoman Empire or the creation of the United Nations. Only 11% are aware of the war's connection with the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinians.

Dr Pennell thinks that the report has the potential to expand and diversify understanding of the war, as well as give a sense of how people in different parts of the world understand the conflict 100 years after it began. She said: "I was delighted to be given the opportunity to be involved with the British Council's report as it is an excellent vehicle to communicate some of the latest research on the global impact of the First World War to a public audience. It is imperative, during the centenary commemorations, that we consider the war in its global context rather than limiting ourselves to Anglo-centric and Euro-centric interpretations."

However, despite a lack of UK knowledge about the war's global scale, the British Council report also reveals the extent to which it still influences overseas views of the UK. 45% of people questioned in India and 28% in France and Russia say the UK's role in the war has a positive effect on how they view the UK today. However, 34% in Turkey and

22% in Egypt say it has a negative effect.

Almost three quarters of people (72%) across the seven countries surveyed believe their country is still affected by the consequences of the war.

The [report](#) calls on the UK and the rest of the world to use the centenary commemorations to create a better understanding of the global nature of the war – recognising its ongoing impact on trust and understanding between the UK and countries around the world.

John Worne, the British Council's Director of Strategy, said: "Far more countries fought and were affected than we generally think. Even a hundred years later a person from the UK travelling for business or pleasure will find the war still influences the way people overseas view the UK. So knowing a little about the global reach of the conflict and its lasting effects will help anyone better understand and navigate the many different reasons people from other countries see us as they do."

**More information:** Read the complete report here:  
[www.britishcouncil.org/organisations/remember-the-world](http://www.britishcouncil.org/organisations/remember-the-world)

Provided by University of Exeter

Citation: Report shows lack of knowledge about World War One's global impact (2014, February 13) retrieved 19 July 2024 from  
<https://phys.org/news/2014-02-lack-knowledge-world-war-global.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.