

Editorial

Welcome to the first edition of the sixth volume of the *Journal of Military History and Defence Studies*. As regular readers will know, the aim of this journal is to publish original research in military history and defence studies, defined broadly to include the history of war and of militaries, in addition to the study of war, strategy, security and military organisation yesterday, today and into the future. A core aim of this journal is to provide an outlet for high quality original research by new researchers and also by military personnel, and this is reflected in the contributions to this volume.

This edition of the journal was released on the third anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine three years earlier, on 24 February 2022. In choosing to invade a neighbour, whose main crime appears to have been a refusal to accept Russian suzerainty, Vladimir Putin threatened the lives and liberty of the Ukrainian people and challenged the continued existence of Ukraine as an independent state, whilst posing an additional threat to his neighbours who were now forced to consider whether they might be next. Illegitimate and unprovoked, Putin's actions denied the very existence of a rules based international order. The result was not what he expected. Despite the apparent imbalance of forces, the people of Ukraine took up arms and halted the Russian invasion, pushing the aggressor back from the gates of Kyiv and inflicting serial humiliation on the forces of what was once considered a superpower. Europe and the United States mobilised in support of Ukraine and provided vital political, economic and military support to that country, enabling the people of Ukraine to hold off the aggressor over three terrible and exhausting years of war.

At the time of writing it is unclear how the war will pan out. Ukraine has fought bravely to defend its people and territory, but remains heavily dependent on support from Europe and the United States. The former appears resolute, but too often support has been more rhetorical than practical. Support from the USA has been key to Ukrainian survival, but now seems open to question. Recent pronouncements from Washington raise doubts not only about American support for Ukraine but also about American reliability as a friend and an ally to Europe. The impact on European security could be seismic. The immediate impact will likely be greater European investment in defence, meeting a long-standing American objective, and, perhaps, also greater European independence from (and less deference to) America on security matters. One suspects that Vladimir Putin is rather pleased by all this, as his forces continue to grind away at considerable cost to themselves and to the people of Ukraine. Whatever the case, recent events demonstrate forcibly the need for us all to take security more seriously, and thus for the kind of discussion and debate that this journal is designed to foster.



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This edition includes a mixture of papers that address historical topics and also current concerns. In the first article, Muiris de Buitléir examines the Battle of Frezenburg Ridge in May 1915, using this as a case study to show the value of geographical information systems technology as an aid to the military historian. His conclusions are thus of interest to the historian of the Western Front in the First World War and to anyone who might use such systems to enhance their own understanding of past battles.

The next three papers are all written by officers from the Irish Defence Forces. The first of these, by Aidan Ryan, explores the challenges associated with cadet training; an issue of particular significance as European armed forces look to reverse their recent decline in numbers. Ryan argues for a greater focus on 'robustness' rather than 'resilience', but notes the need for change in the way that officer cadets are trained if this is to be accomplished. Mark Conway offers a very topical analysis of Russian Private Military Contractors, exploring how they have been used to advance Russian geopolitical goals in Africa. His conclusions are insightful and also very concerning, highlighting the need for a multifaceted international response. The final full article, by Eoghan Carton, explores the idea of 'climate action' and the author suggests ways in which the Irish Defence Forces can provide leadership in this field, reflecting the importance of a very different kind of security concern.

We also have two papers in the 'ten-minute-read' category. These are designed to provide short, sharp and interesting discussion within a quick to read format. They cannot offer the depth of analysis provided in a full article but they do still provide penetrating insight and raise interesting questions about the topics addressed. The first of these, by Gráinne Boyle, explores security challenges within Ireland's maritime domain while the second, by Lisa Hennessy, examines the extent to which small states need to think and act differently in terms of their own defence policy

As ever, we hope that you enjoy reading this edition of the journal and that you return to us for future editions. We also hope that you are enthused to undertake your own research into military history and defence studies and that you may, in future, decide to submit your work for inclusion in this journal (via the link provided on the website)

Finally, please note that, whatever the affiliation of the author, all views expressed here and elsewhere in the journal represent those of the author alone. They should not be taken to represent the views or opinions of any other group or organisation.

The editor

February 2025