

Editorial

Welcome to the second edition of the sixth volume of the *Journal of Military History and Defence Studies*. A survey of world events at this time suggests that there is a continued need for us all to take matters of defence and security very seriously. Calls for peace and attempts at negotiation have not brought an end to Russia's continued aggression in Ukraine, nor have they stopped spectacular Ukrainian counter-strikes such as the successful drone attack on Russian airbases in early June, which may have damaged or destroyed up to ten percent of Russia's long-range bomber fleet.¹ The Russian response, further indiscriminate attacks on Ukrainian cities, was entirely predictable. Military action continues in Gaza, with horrific consequences for the civilian population and, as this edition goes to press, Israel and Iran trade strikes against each other's cities, with grave potential for wider conflict across the Middle East. Other (less newsworthy) conflicts continue to add to the sum total of human misery in Myanmar, Sudan, Somalia and many other places. Russia's war in Ukraine has forcefully reminded many Europeans of the fact that peaceful intent is no defence against malignant ambition, prompting a move to rearm a continent that had chosen to believe that such things related to their past, not their future. Lethal exchanges between India and Pakistan in May demonstrate that the phenomena is not limited to Russia's immediate neighbourhood. Sino-US rivalry, including within the military sphere, continues to represent a key feature of contemporary international politics.. Elsewhere, military personnel fulfil a wide variety of roles in a wide variety of contexts and countries, often providing support and assistance to civilians at home or overseas, while peacekeeping forces attempt to do their job in circumstances that range from the benign to the highly dangerous. There is no shortage of things to think about here.

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. The commentary above suggests that the topic cannot yet be consigned entirely to history, and that the study of what armed forces are and what they do today remains important. A core aim of this journal is to provide discussion of such matters and to provide an outlet for high quality original research by new researchers and also by military personnel. This is reflected in the contributions to this volume, which includes three papers by officers from the Irish Defence Forces (DF) and one from a US Army officer.

In the first paper Michael Campbell addresses the challenge of building a culture of diversity and inclusion within the Irish Defence Forces. Campbell argues that the DF must engage with

¹ Sabine Siebold, 'Ukraine attack damaged 10% of Russia's strategic bombers, Germany says', *Reuters* 7 June 2025.



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ideas of diversity and inclusivity in order to better represent the society which it serves and the paper provides practical suggestions as to how this might best be achieved. The research identifies the value of a focus on diversity and inclusivity, and also a willingness within the DF to pursue such values. It is noteworthy that this comes at a time when, across the Atlantic, the Trump Administration has taken a very different view of such matters and has sought to push back against diversity, equality and inclusion programmes within the US armed forces.

The next two articles focus, in different ways, on the near universal challenge of recruitment and retention within contemporary armed forces. Michael Dabeck addresses the topic from the perspective of both the US and Ireland and focuses on the idea of psychological safety, and the concept of the servant leader, to offer practical solutions with relevance for team cohesion, job satisfaction and retention. David O'Flynn explores how peer influence impacts the decision making process with regards to the retention and turn-over of personnel within the Irish Naval Service. The article unpicks some of the reasons why the service has struggled to retain personnel and offers suggestions as to how they could respond within an environment when highly skilled personnel can easily find well paid jobs ashore with none of the disruption associated with life at sea.

The fourth article in this collection, by Patricia Butler, also addresses issues of retention and argues the case for a mentoring programme to address this issue by fostering personal development, enhancing job satisfaction, and promoting a culture of commitment. Butler identifies key factors essential for a successful Mentoring Programme within the Irish context, which include the importance of building trust and confidentiality, targeted communication strategies to raise awareness, the involvement of mentors at varying ranks, and integrating mentoring into career progression paths. Similarly, Shane Courtney explores mentoring within the Irish Defence Forces and also identifies numerous potential benefits, whilst also discussing some of the downsides and the dangers of the 'dark-side' of mentoring. Butler and Courtney both focus on the Irish example but their conclusions clearly have much wider relevance for other armed forces or large organisations.

Finally, we have one contribution in our 'ten minute read' category. Shane Fitzsimmons reflects on the nature of war today, exploring the question of 'what is hybrid warfare and how does this affect Ireland today?'

As ever, we hope that you enjoy reading these contributions and that these may inspire you to continue your research in these fields and, perhaps, to contribute your own work to this journal at some stage.

The editor

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