

Editorial

Welcome to the latest edition of the Journal of Military History and Defence Studies (JMHDs). 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 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, as is evident from the contributions in this volume.

This edition of the journal is being published some months later than was anticipated, delayed by disruption caused by the SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) pandemic. At the time of writing the pandemic continues to negatively impact communities across the planet, providing a stark reminder that security for individuals, groups and societies can be threatened in unexpected ways and across a spectrum of risks and threats that may not always be centred on military problems or solutions. Crises such as that posed by the pandemic may not be military in origin, but they pose unexpected challenges for armed forces who may be asked to provide support and assistance to civil authorities, as has been evident in many countries since the virus first spread beyond China in early 2020.

Unfortunately, the existence of new transnational threats, such as COVID-19, has not reduced the salience of more traditional challenges or more established military tasks. A survey of global affairs in 2021 would not suggest that the world is a safer place than it was in 2020 or 2010, even if one ignored the pandemic. The comforting notion that violence and conflict is becoming a less common feature of human existence simply does not stand up to serious scholarly analysis.¹ National and international security continues to be menaced by a bewildering variety of challenges across the spectrum of conflict. Recent concerns focused on political instability, criminality, intra-state violence, asymmetric warfare and hybrid threats are now joined by renewed potential for conflict between major powers, something that is now overtly reflected in US strategy and policy in a manner not seen since the Cold War. It seems unlikely that defence focused publications, such as this one, will be redundant any time soon.

Responding to these dangers will require defence forces, and their personnel, to respond to complex challenges that may not have been anticipated in advance. This raises the bar in terms of strategic thinking, and also for the training and education of those who will be required to turn plans into action at the tactical level. The concept of the 'strategic corporal'

¹ Philip Dwyer and Mark Micale (eds.), *The Darker Angels of our nature. Refuting the Pinker Theory of History and Violence*, (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021).



is now decades old, and predates the current digital age, but remains relevant in showing the need for all ranks to be equipped to think and to react appropriately in difficult circumstances. Adversaries will be doing their best to make circumstances difficult, and they will mercilessly exploit mistakes and missteps. Officers, in particular, will need to be able to think creatively to solve unexpected problems, a point well made in the introductory paper written by Brigadier General David Dignam, who discusses the Irish Defence Forces' approach to military education. This point is developed further by Colin Lawlor, who describes the evolution of senior officer training at the Joint Command and Staff School, which seeks to equip its graduates with the intellectual skills to be able to work effectively within the context of a complex operating environment. Working within such an environment will place great demands on all ranks. Conor Gorey explore the challenge of developing 'leaders of character' within the context of the Irish Cadet School, where the next generation of military leaders are first inducted into the military.

Looking beyond the officer corps, Anthony O'Regan explores, in his article, problems of retention within the junior enlisted ranks of the Irish Naval Service, and identifies the need for an appropriate retention strategy for this organisation to hold onto its most important asset, its personnel. Elaine Moloney also focuses on the Irish Naval Service, and explores the relationship between stereotypes, linguistic bias and gender inequalities, providing an important insight into the way in which conscious and unconscious bias can impact on gender inequality, with clear disadvantage to individuals and also to the service as a whole.

The remaining two papers examine key security challenges. Niall McCorry addresses the problem posed by the radicalisation of Irish citizens, within the context of fundamentalist Islam, and explores the potential value of different counter-radicalisation strategies. Ronald Ti looks more widely at European security and uses the DIMEFIL construct to explore the ways in which NATO might employ instruments of power in any future conventional conflict, a timely study given current tensions on the eastern borders of Europe.

We hope that you enjoy this edition of the journal and that you return to us for future editions. We also hope that you may be enthused to submit your own work to the journal and that, in this way, contribute to our mission to make high quality original research more widely available, and to encourage thought and debate in the fields of military history and defence studies.

Finally, please note that, while all of the papers published in this edition were written by serving or retired military personnel, the articles reflect the views of the author alone, and should not be taken to represent the views of any other group or organisation.

The editor

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