

Editorial

Welcome to the first edition of the fifth 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 very well reflected in the contributions to this volume.

It is a depressing reflect on the state of the world today that, once again, as I write this editorial I am forced to note the prevalence of war and conflict in many different regions today. The Russian war in Ukraine continues to grind on and will no doubt furnish plenty of lessons for future contributors, while extracting a terrible cost on the peoples involved. Conflict has ignited once again in Gaza. The horrific attacks against Israelis conducted by Hamas on 7 October 2023 were followed, as Hamas must surely have known they would be, by large scale Israeli military action that has devastated the Gaza strip and led to tens of thousands of civilians casualties. At the time of writing it is not clear when and how military action will end, but the appalling cost to innocent lives, on both sides of the dispute, is all too apparent. Of course, these are only two of the more extreme examples where war, conflict and military activity have a direct impact on people's lives. This makes journals such as this all the more important, it is vital that we continue to study war and military activity so that we can better understand things that affect us, and others, for better or for ill, even if we would prefer that they did not.

This edition of the journal includes a mix of historical and contemporary studies. The journal begins with an article by Martin Fransen that explores issues of combat motivation of US soldiers fighting in Vietnam. It analyses the attitudes of soldiers from 1965-1973 and assesses whether these matched official pronouncements on the war and the reasons for fighting. Through an analysis of soldiers' letters during the war, and postwar interviews, Fransen argues that, contrary to some claims, many soldiers in the years 1965-67 did accept the official explanation that they were fighting a war to contain communism and that this played an important part in their motivation. However, by 1968 defeatism was beginning to become more common and soldiers were less likely to believe in this cause. Grounded in detailed primary source research, the paper has much to tell us about the US experience in Vietnam and about combat motivation more generally.

The second article is also an historical study, this time focused on the Irish Civil War (1922-23). Here the author, Joseph Gleeson, examines the war through the lens of modern counter-insurgency theory. As Gleeson notes, this war offers a good example of a successful counter-



insurgency, rare enough in the history of the twentieth century, and he seeks to draw out lessons that are relevant today. The importance of intelligence is prominent amongst those lessons, as is the need for a comprehensive approach that links and integrates military and political activity to best effect.

The next three papers focus directly on Irish defence and security needs. Ronan Kavanagh provides a detailed examination of evolving challenges in military engineering and explores ways in which smaller armed forces, such as the Irish Defence Forces, can meet such challenges. He shows that military engineering is of profound importance in the current military context before providing some interesting conclusions as to how Ireland, and others, can meet current capability deficits. Rose-Anna White explores how the Irish Defence Forces can enhance their 'brand' through a digital marketing strategy that leverages associations with its academic partners. Reflecting on the challenge of attracting new recruits, White identifies the importance of an effective digital marketing strategy and also the potential to use the Forces' very progressive approach to education, and partnership arrangements with Irish third level institutions, as a means of attracting new recruits. Unfortunately, investment in the education of military personnel cannot be used to attract new recruits if relatively few outside the organisation, including most career guidance counsellors, are not really aware of this. White offers solutions that have relevance beyond the Irish case. The final paper with a specifically Irish focus is by Gerard Hynes, who explores the thorny and complex topic of Irish neutrality, exploring what the term means and asking whether neutrality can be aligned with emerging foreign policy aims at a time when war has returned to the continent of Europe. He makes an interesting and useful contribution to what is a very vibrant, and often controversial, debate.

This edition concludes with an article by Angela McGinn, who explores the relationship between military identity, gender and peacekeeping. Drawn from a wider study on military peacekeeping identity, it considers how extant research, positioned within an interpretive narrative framework, can be used to examine the process through which women and men construct professional military identities. This perspective is largely underrepresented in military research, with previous studies confined to exploring the utility of identity - how it can be manufactured, regulated and aligned with military values. McGinn's paper stresses the need for research that emphasises the subjective practices and consequences of gendered identity work within military organisations.

As ever, we hope that our readers enjoy these articles and that together they help to prompt useful and informed debate on defence matters. Most of all, we hope that they inspire some of you to undertake your own research and to submit your own articles for consideration.

Finally, please note that whatever the affiliation of the author, all views expressed here and throughout 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

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