

Editorial

Welcome to the first edition of the fourth 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 was prepared around the time of the first anniversary of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, an event that provided rather a forceful reminder of the continued relevance of military force within international relations. The Russian resort to force has not, to date, worked in the way that they would have wished and this might reinforce the argument of those who believe that such actions are of declining relevance in the twenty-first century. However, that perspective ignores the fact that the utility of the Russian resort to armed force was undermined not by international law, changing norms, or by the threat of economic sanctions, but by the capacity of Ukrainian arms to challenge their adversary. Thus far, the conflict would appear to reinforce the utility of force rather than to undermine it, at least insofar as it demonstrates the importance of a capacity for self-defence. It remains to be seen whether Russia can gain positive strategic outcomes from their resort to force, although one suspects that the Russian leadership wishes it had not started a war it seems unable to win. However, it is not possible to foresee what will happen next in this conflict, beyond the likelihood that the eventual settlement will reflect military realities on the ground. Thus far it seems that little has occurred that would surprise a well-read military historian, but no doubt this war will prompt future studies that will reveal much that we do not currently know, including (it is hoped) articles in this journal.

The war in Ukraine demands attention, and fits into a dominant tradition within military history, which focuses on major inter-state conflict where armies, navies and air forces face similar organisations within a defined battlespace. Of course, that war (like any war) revolves around much more than conventional military operations. Similarly, our understanding of defence concerns in the past, present and future requires engagement with a complex range of issues across the continuum of conflict. That is reflected in the content of this volume. The first paper, by Maeve O'Grady, explores cybersecurity and addresses the role of international law and regulation within the realm of cyber operations. O'Grady notes the challenge of applying international law within cyberspace but argues that international law continues to exert a normative force on state behaviour and has the potential to regulate sub-threshold cyberoperations as part of the comprehensive approach to cybersecurity.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

In the second paper the author, John Tynan, addresses the matter of transnational far-right extremism within Ireland, exploring the extent to which this may pose a threat to Irish security, arguing that further efforts at a national level to control and regulate violent discourse and hate speech online are necessary to stem the influence of hateful and sometimes violent discourse as portrayed by right wing entities. The third paper, by David Farragher, also explores an issue relevant to Irish security, but here addresses the culture of the Defence Forces, exploring the concept of a 'just culture' that encourages an honest and open reporting environment that supports the capacity to learn from mistakes and removes key barriers to such learning. The case is explored through the Irish example but holds relevance for other armed forces or for any large organisation.

In the final full paper Peter Kelly provides an historical investigation of one aspect of the Allied strategic bombing campaign in the Second World War, using British, American and German archival material to address bombing of the Leuna synthetic fuel plant in Germany. Kelly's focus is less on the bombers above (the traditional perspective of anglophone writers) and more on German activity on the ground, and the different ways in which they were able to mitigate the impact of Allied bombing and to keep the plant in production almost until the end. The paper provides a detailed investigation into one key aspect of the bombing war, and shows how the Germans were able to maintain at least some productivity in a target that one might have expected to be exceptionally vulnerable to bombing given the explosive nature of its key product.

In the previous edition we introduced the idea of the 'ten minute read', short papers that could provide an interesting idea or insight that could be read within the stated timeframe. Necessarily, these lack the depth of full papers but nevertheless can provide much food for thought. That is certainly true of the contribution to this edition, provided by Séan McGourty who addresses the question of whether there is any point in professional military personnel engaging with military history. As editor of this journal it is gratifying to see that McGourty does indeed think that there is value in their doing so, but we remain open to alternative opinions and encourage anyone who disagrees to submit their own argument for publication in future editions.

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

March 2023