

From the Guest Editor

Alexander Hill

This special issue of the Journal of Military and Strategic Studies is concerned with the ongoing war in Ukraine, and particularly the Russian dimension to the war. While much has been and is being published in the Western media relating to Vladimir Putin's *special operation*, relatively little is being written by those who can claim to have genuinely specialist knowledge and understanding of the region. This special issue brings together a group of historians and political scientists – namely the guest editor, Geoffrey Roberts, Paul Robinson, Richard Sakwa and Andrej Krickovic, and Andrei Tsygankov - who have dedicated their careers to the study and understanding of Russia and the former Soviet Union. Many of them have focused in particular on Russia and the Soviet Union at war, or on understanding the nature of the government of Vladimir Putin. These academics continue to engage directly with Russia. One lives and works there, while three others recently visited the country and were able to immerse themselves in a Russian *milieu* in order to enhance their understandings of what is taking place on the Russian side. They are joined by Olayinka Ajala, whose expertise on Africa is used to shed light on specifically African responses to the war. He too has recently spent time on the continent about which he writes. What further sets these

authors apart is that they all are willing to write about what they have seen and understand without feeling obliged to follow an unofficial party line in the Western media that all but dictates a particularly blinkered and flawed understanding of many aspects of Russia's war in the interests of what is perceived as supporting Ukraine. All of those writing here are unwilling to sacrifice their critical faculties for fashionable short-term political ends, and as serious scholars their desire to understand rather than to judge is paramount. As such, and as I hope you'll agree having read their work, they have produced a thought-provoking range of essays on current events and the background to them that will challenge many of the assumptions on which much Western media reporting and wider understanding of the war rest. The authors would like to thank the current editors of JMSS, John Ferris, Terry Terriff, and James Keeley for giving them the opportunity to present their ideas as a special issue of this journal.

Alexander Hill

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