

Letter from the Board of Directors

Description

Editor's Note: the IWI Board of Directors approved its first annual IWI Strategic Plan: 2025-2035 on 01 September 2024. The plan articulates IWI's organizational purpose, strategic goals and implementation through three phases, a market analysis, an overview of its services and operations, and its organizational and leadership structure. Below is the Letter from the Board of Directors regarding the annual plan. You can view the Executive Summary of the Strategic Plan [here](#). If you are interested in financially supporting IWI or an institutional partnership and would like to review the full plan, please contact the Chair of the Board, Kyle Atwell.

The Irregular Warfare Initiative envisions a world where irregular warfare is understood as a critical component of national security.

IWI was created as a joint venture between the Empirical Studies of Conflict Project at Princeton University and the Modern War Institute at West Point in 2020. It remains proudly affiliated with both organizations today.

The need for IWI was identified by three military officers whose time in graduate school coincided with the transition from the Global War on Terror to strategic competition. Kyle Atwell, Nick Lopez, and Shawna Sinnott each spent the first decade of their careers deployed with Special Operations Forces around the world focused on counter-terrorism and counterinsurgency. While attending graduate school through military-funded programs at Princeton and Stanford, they realized that the expertise and insights of academia would have made them better military leaders.

However, academic research is often inaccessible for busy practitioners.

Recognizing the gap between scholars and practitioners, they created the Irregular Warfare Podcast with a simple objective: make important and impactful academic research accessible to practitioners and policymakers.

Since the first podcast was released in May 2020, the Irregular Warfare Initiative has expanded to include the publication of over 112 podcasts (garnering over 1.3 million downloads) and nearly 200 articles, coordinated over 30 community events in locations around the world, built a social media

following of more than 35,000, and developed three cohorts of IWI Fellows (as of September 2024). The IWI team includes 90 volunteers, with a mix of practitioners from across the joint force and interagency, as well as researchers and academics from around the globe.

IWI meets two needs for the national security community:

First, IWI provides an intellectual base to understand the role of irregular warfare in current and future conflict. Irregular warfare is the most common form of conflict, manifesting in proxy wars between states, disinformation campaigns, economic coercion, and other efforts to punish rivals short of large scale combat operations. Additionally, intrastate conflict and violent non-state actors persist around the world, threatening regional and global stability. Irregular warfare is a permanent fixture of international security which must be understood. While much of the national security community focuses on the most dangerous risk of a major direct war between great powers, IWI ensures that attention is paid to understanding the most likely form of conflict manifesting every day around the world: irregular warfare.

Second, IWI preserves the hard fought lessons of the Global War on Terror. In the wake of the Vietnam War, there was a quick turn away from capturing lessons learned and a sentiment that the United States would not conduct a similar intervention again. IWI will preserve the human and intellectual capital of the GWOT-era so the United States, as well as its allies and partners, are prepared for similar conflicts in the future. This will preserve the legacy and sacrifice that a generation of practitioners and scholars committed during the GWOT.

The demand for IWI's services continues to grow. To meet this demand, IWI incorporated as an independent 501(c)(3) non-profit organization in 2023. Raising monetary resources enhances IWI's ability to expand its services.

This IWI Strategic Plan 2025-2035 outlines the mission, vision, and long term objectives for the Irregular Warfare Initiative. This document is developed and formally voted on by the IWI Board of Directors on an annual basis, and projects a vision and milestones for growth over the coming decade.

The most important aspects of this document are the organization purpose followed by IWI's strategic goals and implementation plan. IWI's mission is to "bridge the gap between scholars and practitioners to support the community of irregular warfare professionals." It does this through three strategic objectives: connect the IW community; drive public dialogue; and invest in IW leaders.

To the many volunteers and followers of IWI, we thank you for your commitment to capturing the lessons of the last two decades of conflict and understanding the most common form of conflict within strategic competition. To those who have donated to IWI or are considering doing so, we thank you for your generosity and support.

Sincerely,

The Irregular Warfare Initiative Board of Directors

Kyle Atwell, U.S. Army, Ph.D. Candidate Princeton University

Laura Jones, U.S. Air Force, Ph.D. Candidate Tufts University

Nick Lopez, U.S. Army, MPP Princeton University

Lisa Munde, U.S. Naval Special Warfare Command, MA Stanford University

Shawna Sinnott, U.S. Marine Corps, Ph.D. Stanford University

Guido Torres, IWI Executive Director

Jennifer Walters, U.S. Air Force, Ph.D. Pardee RAND Graduate School

Sam Winter-Levy, Ph.D. Princeton University; Fellow, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

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