

## Fireside Chat: The Future of Total Defense

### Description

## Rethinking Resilience & Resistance in Europe

As the Russian threat persists, and European democracies navigate mounting internal and external pressures, this fireside chat asks a foundational question:

**Who should own the burden of national defense—governments, or society itself?**

---

### Overview

The Irregular Warfare Initiative brings together a panel of senior practitioners and thought leaders to interrogate the evolving paradigm of **Total Defense**—a framework that calls for “whole-of-government” and “whole-of-society” mobilization in the face of conflict.

But what does that actually mean in practice? And what are the risks of going too far?

Drawing on firsthand experiences from Ukraine and across Europe, this conversation probes the ethical, political, and operational challenges of preparing democratic societies for resistance, irregular warfare, and national survival.

---

### Featured Speakers

#### Host

- *Dr. Olga Chiriac* — Director, IWI Europe

#### Panelists

- *Mr. Doug Livermore* — Director of Engagements, IWI
-

- *Dr. Nicholas Krohley* – Resistance Hub Lead, IWI Europe
  - *Mr. Armenak Ohanesian* – Ukraine Hub Lead, IWI Europe
- 

## Key Questions Explored

- What is **Total Defense** and is it a viable doctrine for modern Europe?
  - Should governments lead efforts to shape societal resilience?
  - What are the dangers of **state-led social engineering** in democratic societies?
  - How do we protect **civilian agency** without eroding national cohesion?
  - What lessons—positive and negative—does Ukraine offer?
  - How can NATO and the U.S. support resistance efforts without fueling narratives of foreign interference?
  - What happens when the line between citizen and combatant begins to blur?
- 

## Why This Matters

This conversation challenges prevailing assumptions about civil-military relations, resistance theory, and democratic legitimacy.

It underscores the **strategic and moral stakes** of asking societies to prepare for war—not just with weapons, but with will.

Resilience isn't built overnight, and resistance doesn't begin with a government directive. It begins with trust. •

---

*Image: [Courtesy of DVIDS](#). U.S. Air Force B-1B Lancer aircraft and Allied fighter jets flew in formation over the Monument of Freedom in Riga, Latvia, Aug. 19, 2025. The appearance of U.S. Department of Defense (DoW) visual information does not imply or constitute DoW endorsement.*

## Date Created

2025/09/27

---