

## Intro Letter from the New Editorial Director

### Description

In its [most recent newsletter](#), IWI announced that I was rejoining the organization as its Editorial Director. I am replacing [Tobias Switzer](#), who led IWI's publications through its [four-year anniversary](#) and continued IWI's remarkable growth since 2020. [Kate Espinosa](#) has served admirably as Acting Director and graciously offered to remain as our Deputy Director. I am pleased to also welcome LTC (Ret.) [Steve Ferenzi](#) and [Eric Robinson](#), two thought leaders on irregular warfare (IW) in their own right, who will be helping me and Kate with strategic planning and quality assurance as Senior Advisors for our team.

Personally, I am thrilled to be back with IWI in a formal capacity. I first partnered with IWI during its previous affiliation with the Modern War Institute, working to amplify the [public release of the Irregular Warfare Annex](#) to the 2018 National Defense Strategy. It was a privilege to then be part of IWI's [first cohort of non-resident fellows](#) in 2022, and to support [Lisa Munde](#) with launching Project Maritime the following year. Now returned to IWI, I'm excited to work toward [IWI's longstanding vision](#) of making irregular warfare widely understood for its importance to national security. That mission starts with our readers and contributors, and the wide range of experiences we bring from our respective backgrounds.

In addition to our [Call for Articles](#) and IWI's publishing guidelines, I'd like to offer additional principles to guide writers seeking to publish with IWI:

- **Maintain Excellence:** IWI has provided years of thought leadership through innovative recommendations, showcasing academic research, and offering non-partisan insight into breaking events. Our continued success will come through crisp writing that allows for irregular warfare and the author's argument to rise to the fore.
- **No Word Fights:** To the fullest extent possible, we will limit publication of articles that take issue with the term ["irregular warfare"](#), its theoretical base and [various definitions](#), or activities within. Several years ago, I encouraged [reimagining irregular warfare](#) to elevate IW's value proposition above the endless terminology battle. We will continue to welcome publications that advance irregular warfare study and practice but will prioritize substantive analysis over debates focused primarily on terminology.

- **Be Disciplined:** We must remain focused on the art and science of irregular warfare. If we treat everything as IW, then nothing is. For authors submitting a piece where the IW connection is not apparent, I will ask the Editorial team to work with writers addressing broader issues of statecraft to identify a clear linkage to IW or help them find another outlet for publication. I will also work closely with our [six special projects](#) directors to ensure clarity of vision for irregular warfare across all IWI publications.
- **Avoid Aphorisms:** There are many of these phrases floating around: “Irregular warfare is as important as traditional warfare”; “Irregular warfare is vital for competition”; “Special Operations Forces have a strategic role”; “We need a whole-of-government approach.” All of these statements are based in truth and have been for years. We will prioritize article submissions that move beyond restating consensus in their arguments and instead look for publications that challenge conventional logic or drive toward new insights and actionable solutions that incorporate, implement, and institutionalize IW – all of which will advance IWI’s vision.
- **Learn from History and Literature:** Historical case studies and book reviews that uncover lessons for the practice of irregular warfare today deserve a premium. As Mark Twain is credited with saying, history may not repeat, but it often rhymes. While the IW community assiduously prepares for all future scenarios, we should remain mindful that there are valuable lessons from the past – both the recent past, and farther back. In addition to [our submission guidelines](#) that referenced my publication on the [Cod Wars](#), other helpful case study exemplars include Iskander Rehman’s case study on the [fall of Crete](#), Christopher Booth’s [analysis on the Shetland Bus](#), Jonathan Hackett’s on [counterterrorism in Syria](#), and Steve Ferenzi’s [review of the Tibet insurgency](#) during the Cold War.
- **More Writing Contests:** I hope to introduce periodic writing contests much like [the Strategy Bridge](#) had previously done semi-regularly around specific prompts. We will aim to partner IWI’s proposed topics with a range of civilian and Professional Military Education (PME) institutions to continue bridging across our individual siloes of excellence. The goal will be to develop short arguments (close to our lower-limit word count of 600 words) that sprout seeds for others to begin exploring policy, operational, or academic offshoots. While our core submissions and special projects remain the IWI editorial team’s primary endeavors, these contests will introduce new ideas at the ground floor for future exploration in longer formats.

It is a privilege to rejoin IWI in its fifth year. The future is bright for IWI due to its dedicated volunteers and the thousands who contribute to and enjoy our podcasts and written content. But it is also bright due to the continued and growing need for irregular warfare to provide value and help address the main security challenges of the day. I look forward to continuing the dialogue as Editorial Director and as a part of this community.

[Kevin Bilms](#) is Editorial Director of the Irregular Warfare Initiative and a term member with the Council on Foreign Relations.

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