

Chokepoints: American Power in the Age of Economic Warfare

Description

Episode 151 of the *Irregular Warfare Podcast* explores how the United States wields power not only through military force, but through dollars, sanctions, export controls, and supply chains. Anchored in Eddie Fishman's book [Chokepoints: American Power in the Age of Economic Warfare](#), this episode examines the rise of economic statecraft as a central feature of great power competition.

Drawing on the firsthand experiences of former Treasury Secretary Jack Lew and former Deputy National Security Advisor Daleep Singh, the conversation unpacks key concepts such as dollar dominance, sanctions design, and the hidden "chokepoints" embedded within global finance and technology that give the United States asymmetric leverage.

Through case studies on Iran, Russia, and China, the guests assess both the power and the limits of economic warfare. Sanctions can bring adversaries to the negotiating table—but only when aligned with clear political objectives, coalition support, and careful calibration to avoid self-inflicted harm. In the strategic competition with China, export controls on foundational technologies reflect a shift from coercing behavior to preserving relative advantage. The episode ultimately argues that economic tools must be treated with the same rigor as military force: grounded in legitimacy, disciplined in execution, and guided by a coherent doctrine for an era of geo-economic rivalry.

[Secretary Jack Lew](#) served as U.S. Secretary of the Treasury from 2013 to 2017 under President Barack Obama. Over the course of his career, he also served as White House Chief of Staff and Director of the Office of Management and Budget in both the Clinton and Obama administrations, shaping major economic policy decisions, leading complex budget negotiations, and representing the United States in global financial affairs.

[Daleep Singh](#) is an American economist who served as Deputy National Security Advisor for International Economics and deputy director of the National Economic Council in the Biden administration, where he coordinated economic-security policy at the intersection of markets and national strategy

[Edward "Eddie" Fishman](#) is an American international relations scholar, former U.S. diplomat, and Senior Research Scholar at the Center on Global Energy Policy at Columbia University, where he teaches economic statecraft. He is the author of *Chokepoints: American Power in the Age of Economic*

Warfare, drawing on his experience at the State Department, Treasury Department, and various policy institutions.

[Ben Jebb](#) is the host for this episode. Please reach out to Ben and the Irregular Warfare Podcast team with any questions about the episode or the broader mission of the show.

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