

Unrestricted Innovation: The Supply Chain Battlefield

Description

Episode 139 examines how supply chains have become instruments of strategic competition and the implications for U.S. defense capabilities. Our guests discuss how China gained control over critical drone components originally invented in the United States and what this means for economic security and irregular warfare.

Our guests begin by analyzing the “anatomy of a drone” to reveal how China leveraged consumer electronics manufacturing to dominate military supply chains. They then examine the “missing middle” in capital formation between venture funding and manufacturing scale, and how this gap undermines America’s ability to compete in protracted economic campaigns. Finally, our guests discuss DIU’s initiatives like Blue Manufacturing and Forge to rebuild domestic production capacity, the challenge of creating trusted supplier networks with allies, and how economic infrastructure has become both an offensive and defensive tool in modern warfare.

[Dr. Fiona Murray](#) is the William Porter Professor of Entrepreneurship and Associate Dean of Innovation at MIT Sloan School of Management. She chairs the NATO Innovation Fund, a ~\$1 billion venture capital fund investing across 24 NATO allies. Her recent research examines drone supply chain vulnerabilities and the geography of innovation. She previously served on the UK Prime Minister’s Council of Science and Technology and holds a PhD from Harvard.

[Dr. John Griffin](#) leads the Autonomy Portfolio and Boston office at the Defense Innovation Unit (DIU). A retired Marine Corps Lieutenant Colonel with 28 years of service. He previously taught at the U.S. Naval War College and led regional engagement for the National Security Innovation Network. He holds a doctorate from Northeastern University and a master’s from Harvard.

[Don Edwards](#) and Teal Reynolds are the hosts for Episode 139. Please reach out to them with any questions about this episode or the [Irregular Warfare Podcast](#).

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