

## Winning Without Fighting: Strategic Culture and Gray Zone Competition (Part 1)

### Description

Episode 132 of the Irregular Warfare Podcast explores how strategic culture shapes approaches to irregular warfare and competition in the gray zone. This is part one of a two-part series examining why nations conceptualize irregular warfare differently and how cultural biases affect competition below the threshold of armed conflict.

Our guests discuss why irregular warfare must be central to American grand strategy in an age of crisis and competition. Dr. Susan Bryant shares insights from her book *Winning Without Fighting*, examining how American strategic culture with its preference for binaries, belief that war is aberrant, and faith in technological solutions creates disadvantages against adversaries operating in the gray zone. Drawing from their extensive operational and academic experience, both guests explore historical examples from Afghanistan, Iraq, and El Salvador to illustrate how cultural biases and quantification obsession undermine irregular warfare efforts.

Dr. Susan Bryant is an Adjunct Professor at Georgetown University and Johns Hopkins University. A retired Army Colonel with 28 years of service, she is co-author of *Winning Without Fighting* and currently serves as Executive Director of Strategic Education International.

Dr. Thomas X. Hammes is a Distinguished Research Fellow at the Institute for National Strategic Studies at National Defense University. A retired Marine Corps Colonel with 30 years of service, he is the author of *The Sling and the Stone* and has extensive operational experience in insurgency and irregular warfare.

[Don Edwards](#) and [Julia McClenon](#) are the hosts for Episode 125. Please reach out to them with any questions about this episode or the [Irregular Warfare Podcast](#).

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