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<v SPEAKER\_2>In this episode, recorded August 22nd, 2025, we're sitting down to talk to Dr.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>Julie Kim to discuss her newly released briefing note titled The Canadian Patrol Submarine Project, CPSP, and its geopolitical implications.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>We talk about the project itself and some of the different countries and firms interested in buying for the project, and talk about some of the geopolitical implications and considerations that might factor into Canada's purchase.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>Julie, welcome back to Defence Deconstructed.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>Hi, thank you for having me again.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>So we're here to talk about a recent briefing note you published, titled The Canadian Patrol Submarine Project and its Geopolitical Implications.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>Before we get to that geopolitical implications part, let's talk a little bit about The Canadian Patrol Submarine Project for listeners that may not have been following.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>Sure, but before we dive in, I should mention that I'm not a submarine engineer or a technical expert.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>So my perspective comes from an academic standpoint, based on the research and analysis I did for this paper.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>That makes two of us.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>Now, with that being said, going back to your question, Canada has the longest coastline in the world, abounded by the Atlantic, Arctic, and Pacific Oceans.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>But this extensive coastline is facing new challenges, especially with the accelerating impacts of climate change.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>The Arctic, for example, is warming about four times faster than the global average, which means it's becoming more accessible to countries with military ambitions in the region, like Russia and China.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>So for Canada, having advanced underwater capabilities is essential for protecting its sovereignty and maritime security.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>Submarines play a really important role here.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>They allow Canada to detect and deter potential threats, secure its approaches at sea, and even project power in striking capability further from its shores.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>The problem is that Canada's current fleet of Victoria-class submarines are old and need to be replaced.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>They were originally built in the UK back in the 1980s and then purchased by Canada in the 90s.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>Those subs are scheduled to be decommissioned in the mid 2030s, which means Canada needs a new fleet of submarines to meet its defence objectives and respond to emerging security threats.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>That's where the Canadian Patrol Submarine Project comes in.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>In April 2024, the government released its Defence Policy Update, Our North, Storing and Free, which highlighted the need to strengthen Canada's ability to monitor and control its maritime and underwater approaches and to renew and expand the submarine fleet.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>Then a few months later in July, the government announced plans to procure up to 12 conventionally powered, under-ice capable submarines.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>And the CPSP has determined that the most efficient means of procuring a replacement fleet is to pursue military off-the-shelf submarines, which are basically foreign-built designs that already exist and can be adapted to meet Canadian needs.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>Then in September 2024, Public Services and Procurement Canada put out a request for information to gather details from potential bidders.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>Everything from procurement and construction to delivery timelines and operational capabilities.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>The idea is to award a contract by 2028 so that Canada can have its first new submarines delivered no later than 2035 and avoid any gaps in capability.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>Based on some of that discussion that's been out there already, some of that documentation, what factors do you think Canada is considering in this purchase and what capabilities are essential?

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<v SPEAKER\_1>So there are a number of things that the Canadian government has to consider when looking for new submarines.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>I would say the first thing would be meeting a tight deadline.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>The feeling I get from doing research for this paper and talking to defence experts, yourself included, is that Canada needed new submarines yesterday.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>So one of the biggest factors is whether a partner can actually deliver them on time and the sooner the better.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>And another issue is maintenance and repair.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>Canada's current submarines are what's called an orphan class, meaning that no other units are in service.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>This means that the RCN, the Royal Canadian Navy, had to

essentially recreate supply chains on its own and build or repair parts whenever something breaks.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>So for the future submarine acquisition, it's important to select a partner with robust supply chains and easily accessible and available spare parts for timely repair of vessels.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>In terms of capabilities, Arctic operations are key.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>Canada needs submarines that can operate in Arctic conditions, have under ice capabilities and endure long-term missions.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>South Korea's KSS-3 submarines are a good example here.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>They're powered by lithium-ion batteries, which offer greater cruising speed and allow them to stay submerged longer with more than 21 days underwater.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>That's especially valuable for the Arctic operations.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>Also new submarines must be able to break through ice and surface in emergencies.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>This requires a minimum of 3,000 tons.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>And right now, only South Korea and Japan currently manufacture 3,000-ton class conventional submarines.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>But since Japan has decided not to take part in the CPSB bid, that essentially leaves South Korean submarines the only others on the market currently in service.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>And finally, interoperability with allies is essential.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>Canada doesn't operate in isolation, so whatever submarines it chooses have to be able to work seamlessly with its partners, NATO partners and other close allies.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>So if you put all that together, balancing those priorities is what will ultimately shape Canada's decision.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>This episode of Defence Deconstructed is brought to you by Irving Shipbuilding.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>You'd itemize some of the different countries that are interested, but I don't think you caught everybody.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>What is the full complement of contenders for our submarine work?

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<v SPEAKER\_1>Yes, I believe a number of countries have shown interest in the CPSP, including France, Germany, Norway, South Korea, Spain and Sweden.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>I could briefly talk about some of the key actors here.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>On the European side, Germany and Norway have been involved in a joint submarine construction partnership for several years.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>There are currently six submarines called 22C-D under construction, with two reserved for Germany and four for Norway.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>The German Navy is expected to receive its first vessel in 2028.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>Now, the German company leading the bid is T-Sankt-Coulb, Marine Systems, and their CEO has said in an interview that if Canada were to join the German-Norwegian partnership, it will be possible for Canada to receive its first submarine by the requested timeline.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>But he mentioned that joining the production line at this stage would likely mean redesigning one of the submarines that's already safe for Germany or Norway.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>Meanwhile, over in the Indo-Pacific, South Korea has taken a particularly active role.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>Two major shipbuilders, Hanwha Ocean and HD Hyundai Heavy Industries, who are in normal times actually competitors, have teamed up and formed a one team partnership.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>And among all the countries interested in the CPSP, South Korea is the only one so far that has taken an extra step by submitting a detailed unsolicited proposal worth of \$20 billion.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>They proposed KSS-3 submarines, which is a detail electric attack submarine capable of firing torpedoes and submarine launch ballistic missiles.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>And they've committed to delivering their latest KSS-3 submarines before the deadline with the first four ready to be delivered by 2035.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>That early delivery is something they're really highlighting as a strength.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>And they've also proposed a detailed crew training plan which states that Canadian soldiers would receive basic and tactical training in Korea while the submarines are being built.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>The idea is that by the time the vessels are delivered, the crews will already be trained and ready for immediate deployment.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>So overall, several countries are interested in the CPSP and each option has its own strengths and challenges and it will be interesting to see how Canada weighs those factors moving forward.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>And so to come back to this point, what do you think was kind of the some of the key emphasis of the paper focused on

geopolitical implications?

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<v SPEAKER\_2>What do you think are some of the considerations that Canada might be considering outside of just the strict military capability when it comes to actually making this selection?

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<v SPEAKER\_1>So submarine procurement is not just buying regular military weapons.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>It's a major defence project.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>And whoever Canada chooses will be its partner for the next several decades.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>So when making that choice, Canada must consider not only operational capabilities, cost and procurement timeline, but also the broader geopolitical and strategic implications of its decisions.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>In other words, which long term relationship makes the most sense for Canada's defence objectives?

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<v SPEAKER\_1>And I will say that there are two distinct paths here.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>Canada can either deepen its alignment with NATO partners or turn to the Indo-Pacific to diversify its partnerships.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>For starters, one path would be to choose a partner from NATO allies.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>What would be ongoing trade tensions with the US and the shifting geopolitical landscape?

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<v SPEAKER\_1>Canada needs to diversify its defence partnerships beyond the US and strengthen ties with other NATO allies.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>As a step toward this process, at the 2024 NATO Summit, Canada signed a trilateral Letter of Intent with Germany and Norway to establish a strategy partnership aimed at strengthening maritime

security cooperation in the North Atlantic.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>More recently, this year, at the EU-Canada Summit in June 2025, Canada signed the EU-Canada Security Defence Partnership as a first step toward Canada's participation in the Rearm Europe Plan.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>These agreements could help pave the way for Canada to buy submarines from its traditional allies.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>But at the same time, Canada also has the option of looking forward, looking toward the Indo-Pacific.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>Canada already recognizes the significant strategy opportunities presented by the Indo-Pacific region and has released the Indo-Pacific strategy.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>It has also been actively engaging with key partners in the region, including South Korea.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>As for South Korea, Canada and South Korea have long been like-minded partners.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>And in September 2022, the two countries elevated their relationship to a comprehensive strategy partnership based on five priorities, one of which is strengthening security cooperation, including peacekeeping and maritime security.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>And when it comes to maritime security, the ROK Navy and the RCN already work closely together.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>They conduct joint military exercises through Operation Horizon and Operation NEON.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>They also work side by side in major international maritime exercises, such as RIMPAC and Exercise Pacific Vanguard.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>So if Canada procures South Korean submarines, the RCN would operate shared technology with the ROK Navy for several decades, which would not only enhance interoperability between the two navies,

but also further strengthen joint operations in the Pacific.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>South Korea has also demonstrated its ability to work closely with NATO partners and produce NATO compliant equipment.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>For example, Poland has signed over \$20 billion in defence contracts with South Korea since 2022, including Black Panther tanks, self-propelled howitzers and multiple rocket launchers.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>And HANA Ocean has signed a Master Ship Repair Agreement with the US Navy, which shows the company's capability to undertake maintenance, repair and overhaul services on American vessels, as well as its partners, including the RCN.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>In fact, if selected, HANA has proposed building maintenance facilities on both Canadian coasts and employing Canadian workers.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>So to wrap up, Canada's choice of submarines will carry significant geopolitical implications.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>Canada could go with its traditional allies and choose submarines from NATO countries, which would be a more familiar path.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>Or it could take a bold step toward the Indo-Pacific by selecting South Korean submarines, which would signal a shift in its defence posture.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>So I think you were pressed in in the research on this and thinking that there were some wider implications.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>After you finished the research and actually published the paper, and only not that many days ago, the commander of the Royal Canadian Navy, Admiral Topsy, was quoted in an interview saying that the final decision on a submarine could be based on other sets of factors, such as the ones that you touched on, including, quote, the lowering of trade barriers, access to markets, and a commitment to invest in Canada.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>And essentially, what is the country prepared to give us

if you make the sizable investments?

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<v SPEAKER\_2>So I think you were on to something there, Julie.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>So as summer winds down for you and everyone else, the last question to you on this sunny, at least in Ottawa, August day, what are you reading?

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<v SPEAKER\_1>Well, it's actually sunny here in Toronto as well.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>So yeah, so I'm currently reading a book called Why Nations Fail, The Origins Of Power, Prosperity, And Poverty, by Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>It looks at why some countries are rich while others remain poor, drawing on cases from different regions and periods in history.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>And the authors mainly argue that it's all about institutions, like political and economic institutions, which shape a nation's stability and economic success.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>It's a really thought-provoking book and I'm also learning a lot from it.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>All right, well, Julie, thanks again for joining us on Defence Deconstructed.

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<v SPEAKER\_1>Thank you so much.

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<v SPEAKER\_2>Thanks for listening to Defence Deconstructed.

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