

WEBVTT

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<v SPEAKER_1>In this Triple Helix episode of Defence Deconstructed, which was recorded January 15th, 2026, we're sitting down with our fellow, Mike Petric, to discuss his latest paper, Opportunities for Canadian Generative AI in the Indo-Pacific.

00:00:14.860 --> 00:00:21.160

<v SPEAKER_1>We examine the opportunities for Canadian AI in the Indo-Pacific and what both government and industry can do to pursue them.

00:00:23.360 --> 00:00:25.520

<v SPEAKER_1>Mike, welcome back to Defence Deconstructed.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Thanks.

00:00:25.920 --> 00:00:27.960

<v SPEAKER_2>Pleasure to be here, Dave.

00:00:27.960 --> 00:00:43.940

<v SPEAKER_1>So we've got you back to come in and talk about some of the work that touches on things we've done with you with our Triple Helix Minds Collaborative Network, looking at the potential opportunities for Canadian AI in the Indo-Pacific region.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Just maybe as a start point for the discussion, I guess, what do you think as a high level, what do you see as the potential for this intersection?

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<v SPEAKER_1>What prompted you to put fingers to keyboard?

00:00:56.340 --> 00:01:09.720

<v SPEAKER_2>Good question and first, let me start by saying thank you for getting up at what is an unreasonable time for you in doing this, for a more reasonable time for me because I'm joining you from Singapore.

00:01:11.320 --> 00:01:12.920

<v SPEAKER_2>Let's see here.

00:01:12.920 --> 00:01:19.080

<v SPEAKER_2>There's a lot to unpack when it comes to generative AI.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I think everyone talks about how Canada is a leader, how it's reshaping markets, the geopolitics of it, how it's changing the

economic calculus of various industries.

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<v SPEAKER_2>It started to get my attention from my vantage point here in Singapore for a couple of reasons.

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<v SPEAKER_2>The first was around my own experience in professional services and advisory work.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Being in a professional services firm for most of my career, seeing how it's dramatically impacted, work that's being done in the knowledge economy was something I experienced firsthand.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Then you think about the external signals.

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<v SPEAKER_2>You've got the US that released the AI strategy, which was very clearly focused on propagating and promoting the US artificial intelligence and generative AI industries.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Then I think finally, the thing that really drove me to put pen to paper was some of the observations in the market here.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I saw other countries aggressively promoting their interests and their industries in a variety of countries.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I thought, I think there's probably more that we can do.

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<v SPEAKER_2>For example, as I was writing the paper, I saw several frontier labs and even France actively piloting and partnering with the government of Singapore and deliberately shaping engagement in the region.

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<v SPEAKER_2>My reaction was, well, why aren't we here in force?

00:03:14.300 --> 00:03:14.740

<v SPEAKER_1>Okay.

00:03:15.860 --> 00:03:22.740

<v SPEAKER_1>We'll circle back a little bit on what we could do to be there in the region in force piece.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Maybe just talk about some of the different attributes of the potential that sitting in the region.

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<v SPEAKER_1>You think the Canadian AI enterprise writ large in Canada can potentially bring to bear.

00:03:35.540 --> 00:03:39.860

<v SPEAKER_1>Like, what do you see as the potential things that we can offer to the region?

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<v SPEAKER_1>And then circle back on the piece about how we could better leverage that.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Sure, sure.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I think, when I think about our position in the market generally in the Indo-Pacific, there's one one thing that I've noticed in the last 12 months or so.

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<v SPEAKER_2>It's become increasingly clear that the world is viewing Canada as somewhat a distinct entity from the United States, where I'm not convinced that maybe that was always how we were viewed.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I think some of the tension and the challenges that you're seeing have driven a bit of a realization that we have our own foreign policy, we have our own interests, and we have our own industry and technology capabilities that are relevant in a highly complicated and contested market like the Indo-Pacific.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So when I think about where we can add value, I think one of the most valuable things we can offer, partners and allies in the region here, is the ability to escape the binary choice between whether it's technology from China or technology from the US.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I think we can offer a third path, if you will, and some alternatives, particularly in industries and sectors that are strategically consequential, economically important, and frankly sensitive for any government.

00:05:29.560 --> 00:05:43.200

<v SPEAKER_1>In your observation, that dynamic about Canada being a

third path, not just 1.125 or something off of the one primary path, there's been a shift that you've observed.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Absolutely.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I mean, so I wrote the paper several months ago, and I think the difference and the stark relief between Canada and the US is even more so now, given some of the dynamics with activities in the Western Hemisphere, particularly around Venezuela and Greenland, of course.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Those aren't developments that are going unnoticed in this part of the world.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So maybe if it was viewed as 1.5, it's different now.

00:06:28.560 --> 00:06:32.200

<v SPEAKER_1>Okay.

00:06:32.200 --> 00:06:45.020

<v SPEAKER_1>One of the observations I have when we discuss this, we just, it's hard to get much sense of specificity beyond strength in AI and get into any kind of use case or particular set of applications.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Like what sector of applicability, market segments do you see?

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<v SPEAKER_1>Like I just maybe walk through a little bit about like the particular areas that you would observe that there is potential applicability, benefit, places where you think Canada, Canadian companies could spend more time focusing in the region.

00:07:03.420 --> 00:07:09.760

<v SPEAKER_1>What strengths should we bear to what particular aspects of the wider Indo-Pacific market?

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<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah, it's a great question.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So I think that if I was going to pick a few areas, I would start with some of the existing strengths that we have, and some of the examples where there's been successful entry into the market and then go to some of the more innovative potentially smaller firms

that are doing great things in Canada, but have lots of runway, I think, in the region.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So just at a high level, a couple areas that I think are highly relevant, particularly in Southeast Asia, maritime domain awareness.

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<v SPEAKER_2>It's an extremely critical capacity that immense applicability for generative AI.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And there's no shortage of a desire to have better control over coastlines, better understanding of where certain ships are, being able to filter through false AIS signals and the like.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Decision support systems for defence, I think, I think there's definitely a play there.

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<v SPEAKER_2>On the commercial side, you know, logistics and supply chain rationalization, just given the vast distances that are involved in, whether it's the maritime industry or the aviation industry here.

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<v SPEAKER_2>You know, you think of back to government, citizen services.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Another big one, particularly in Singapore here, would be around financial services, fraud, risk management, compliance automation, customer operations, those sort of things.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So back to what I was mentioning earlier about where we've seen success.

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<v SPEAKER_2>You know, I think everyone points to the large 800-pound gorilla cohere.

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<v SPEAKER_2>They've obviously had great inroads in Korea with LG.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I understand they're doing some good work in Japan.

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<v SPEAKER_2>You know, a smaller firm, Canadian firm Blue Wave, won a contract in Tokyo around green mobility.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But beyond the headline names, like there's a couple of companies in Ottawa that I think would have immense potential in the market here, like Laris.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Some of the work they're doing on maritime domain awareness is highly applicable.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Another one, Zegra, their solutions around spoofing and other things are quite interesting.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So I think part of it is just going to be matching.

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<v SPEAKER_2>What capabilities do we have?

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<v SPEAKER_2>What proven solutions do we have?

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<v SPEAKER_2>And then what are the use cases here in the region?

00:10:09.160 --> 00:10:12.600

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00:10:24.900 --> 00:10:32.160

<v SPEAKER_1>Okay, so to pivot back to how we can kind of seize the opportunity piece of the discussion.

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<v SPEAKER_1>I guess there's an interesting space.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Part of it has sort of an explicit defence and security nexus.

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<v SPEAKER_1>And the government's said lots of things about wanting to encourage additional defence export, particularly to new markets, so it's clear link there.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Governments obviously got a very strong interest in the artificial intelligence sector at large, to the point where we have a minister for that, where we didn't before.

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<v SPEAKER_1>But there's a bunch of other things that you mentioned that are more commercial.

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<v SPEAKER_1>So kind of bridging between defence and security export potential, other things that would just sort of be strictly commercial, some things, you know, potentially dual use, a term that gets so overused, I'm not sure what it means anymore, that would fall either in between or on both of these things.

00:11:19.280 --> 00:11:34.400

<v SPEAKER_1>You made a comment earlier about how other countries are doing various things, like what is it that you would sketch out that Canada should be doing to try and position the strengths that you've observed and the opportunity that you see to maximum effect?

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<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah, I think there's a couple of things.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I mean, there's a role both for government and industry.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And part of this will turn on the level of ambition and some of the guidance that I think comes out in the Defence Industrial Strategy, which we're still waiting on.

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<v SPEAKER_2>As you mentioned, the government's been very clear about wanting to double non-US exports in I think it was 10 years.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And so I think, when I think about the practical steps that we could take and what others are doing and what we could learn potentially, a few things come top of mind.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So the first thing, I think we need to pick a few priority markets.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I would advocate for some mix of Japan, Korea, Singapore, and Australia likely, all for different reasons.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Then think about what are some of the use cases, what are some of the things that we've proved out in Canada that we can bring here.

00:12:51.540 --> 00:12:58.420

<v SPEAKER_2>I think the main thing is that focus is going to be bred particularly in a region as complicated as this.

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<v SPEAKER_2>The game is mainly around how you can deliver either productivity, improvements, or cost outcomes that are going to be funded by decision-makers, whether that's public sector or private sector.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Then I think there's a real potential, and we observe other countries doing this, using commercial diplomacy and co-development to open up doors.

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<v SPEAKER_2>We've seen that here in Singapore with the French advocating for Mistral and doing a pilot with the MOD.

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<v SPEAKER_2>We've observed examples in other countries like Korea and Japan.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I guess in short, the advice I think would be don't try to do the entirety of the Indo-Pacific, be targeted, think about where we have credibility and existing trade ties, and then how can we exploit those for mutual benefit and trade diversification.

00:14:08.380 --> 00:14:36.900

<v SPEAKER_1>And just to pull this through a little bit more, I mean, the government is, they're doing a number of things while we wait for the final industrial strategy document, but focused on export support that's already been initiated, changing the mandate for Export Development Canada, some reorganization of the approach staffing focus of the Trade Commissioner Service to focus more on defence exports in particular.

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<v SPEAKER_1>I guess I've, at least from my vantage point, a lot of

that seems to be at least publicly very much focused on the opportunities with Europe and tied into some of the Prime Minister's travels there and his comments about Rearm Europe and the SAFE program.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Have you noticed in the Indo-Pacific, is there your sense that some of that activity at least is having an impact in the region that you're currently living in?

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<v SPEAKER_1>I guess I've always been struck in the last, what is it now, 10 or 11 months that the enthusiasm with Europe is interesting.

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<v SPEAKER_1>It's kind of a curious thing that that's all happening when the last foreign policy of consequence that came out of the Canadian government in the last two decades has been to engage more in the Indo-Pacific and yet we haven't really seen as much of a focus on those markets.

00:15:21.740 --> 00:15:26.400

<v SPEAKER_1>Are you seeing some of that happening in the kinds of sectors that you've been talking about?

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<v SPEAKER_1>Or is that, I need to have a regional rebalance between Europe and the Pacific writ large if we want to be successful in the particular spaces that we're talking about here.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I mean, I think you have to do both, right?

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<v SPEAKER_2>Particularly when you've got to target as ambitious as doubling your exports.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I mean, my personal view is that Europe sort of became the default because it's familiar and proximate.

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<v SPEAKER_2>That's not really a strategy though.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Particularly in this area, when you look at population growth in the regions that are going to be driving economic growth, this is where we need to be.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I think that the markets here, there's a lot of digital adoption, government modernization, and I think, frankly, the distance, unfortunately, becomes a bit of a barrier.

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<v SPEAKER_2>My sense generally in the region is that there's not a lack of government support or mechanisms that would enable effective market entry and penetration here, but it's more that Canadian firms haven't yet leaned into the opportunity.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Ultimately, you can have as much government support as you want.

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<v SPEAKER_2>The Trade Commissioner Service does great work.

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<v SPEAKER_2>EDC does great work.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But if there's not Canadian clients that are trying to avail themselves of those services to capture opportunities, it's for naught.

00:17:26.060 --> 00:17:38.180

<v SPEAKER_2>So I think many folks like to ask what can the government do, but I think in this case, you've got to ask, what's the private sector doing, and should they be doing a bit more?

00:17:39.660 --> 00:17:40.980

<v SPEAKER_1>Okay.

00:17:40.980 --> 00:17:48.040

<v SPEAKER_1>Well, Mike, thanks for joining us to chat about some of your insights into the opportunity in the region.

00:17:48.040 --> 00:17:48.820

<v SPEAKER_1>Last question to you.

00:17:48.820 --> 00:17:50.560

<v SPEAKER_1>What are you reading at the moment?

00:17:51.600 --> 00:17:58.080

<v SPEAKER_2>So the book I'm reading right now was suggested by a friend of mine.

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<v SPEAKER_2>It's called The Finest Hotel in Kabul.

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<v SPEAKER_2>It's about the Intercontinental Hotel, which was a well-known spot.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Unfortunately, I never got to visit when I was in Kabul.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But it's a sort of a history from the from the 60s to present day.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I'd recommend it, but it is a little bit of a heavy read.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Okay.

00:18:20.780 --> 00:18:21.440

<v SPEAKER_1>All right.

00:18:21.440 --> 00:18:24.560

<v SPEAKER_1>Mike, thanks very much for joining us on Defence Deconstructed.

00:18:24.560 --> 00:18:26.080

<v SPEAKER_2>Thanks, Dave.

00:18:26.080 --> 00:18:28.260

<v SPEAKER_1>Thanks for listening to Defence Deconstructed.

00:18:28.260 --> 00:18:33.720

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00:18:33.720 --> 00:18:40.320

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