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<v SPEAKER_1>In this Triple Helix episode of the Defence Deconstructed Podcast, recorded on the 20th of February, 2026, talking to Dr.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Olena Kryzhanivska to discuss her latest paper, Lessons and Warnings for Canada's Defence Investment Agency.

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<v SPEAKER_1>In the paper and in the podcast, we talk about the announcement of the Defence Investment Agency and some of the language outlining what it would do, and in particular focusing on the aspect of centralizing procurement function to align with partners like the United Kingdom, France and Australia.

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<v SPEAKER_1>We talk about case studies that Olena did on those three countries and then come back with some recommendations to guide Canada on the implementation and operational success of the Defence Investment Agency.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Olena, welcome to Defence Deconstructed.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Thank you, Dave.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Thank you for having me.

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<v SPEAKER_1>We've got you on here to do the first podcast with us.

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<v SPEAKER_1>In your capacity, as our COVE fellow, talking about the paper you published with us, Lessons and Warnings for Canada's Defence Investment Agency.

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<v SPEAKER_1>That agency is again in the news of late because it got mentioned extensively in the Defence Industrial Strategy.

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<v SPEAKER_1>I think we'll be having you back on before too long to talk a little bit about that industrial strategy.

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<v SPEAKER_1>But for today's discussion, the Defence Investment Agency

is the key feature of the current government's approach to defence, defence innovation, investment in the Canadian Defence Industrial Base.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Just to start this conversation, you talk a little bit about some of the observations you had from the release around the agency, and then the rest of the discussion, you're going to draw on some of the comparison you did in the paper to some case studies.

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<v SPEAKER_1>But just a little bit about your take on the key features of the Defence Investment Agency as it's proposed.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Absolutely.

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<v SPEAKER_2>First of all, I was very excited about the launch of Defence Investment Agency as well the Defence Industrial Strategy that we recently also observed.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I think for Canada it's a great step towards, first of all, signalling its commitment to defence.

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<v SPEAKER_2>It's not just numbers, but it's also the reforms that Canada needs to implement to be able to enter any armed conflict or any other conflict with the state.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So, yeah, just increasing defence capabilities and streamlining the procurement is very important.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And we see this line of reforms across several NATO countries, in Europe, UK, Australia, which is not a NATO country, but a global partner.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So, yeah, Canada is basically on track with its reforms.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And the launch of Defence Investment Agency showed us a very serious signal.

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<v SPEAKER_2>The current government shows to society how important defence procurement becomes for Canada with its very ambitious goals

of increasing defence spending in the coming years.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So, what we saw from the first announcement, I think a lot of excitement from the public sector, from civil society as well.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Defence Industrial Strategy also gives us a little bit more clarity on how this agency will operate.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So for now, Defence Investment Agency will be a special operating agency under the PSPC.

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<v SPEAKER_2>We know that the current defence procurement system in Canada is rather fragmented across different departments.

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<v SPEAKER_2>We have the NDP, PSPC, ICED, Treasury Board and multiple other bodies involved.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So DIA will sit somewhere in the middle of all of that, of all that system and will combine some of the major tasks.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So yeah, basically a separate agency for defence procurement currently under PSPC, but with the new Defence Industrial Strategy, we see that there is expectation that it will be a standalone agency in the next year or so.

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<v SPEAKER_2>It will be responsible for a rather large contracts of over \$100 million.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And its general goal is to streamline the procurement process, defence procurement process in Canada.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And I think the good signal is that there is understanding that the procurement is not moving as fast as we want and doesn't deliver the capabilities that the armed forces need right now.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So the goal of this agency is to streamline that process.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And I think it's a very positive signal.

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<v SPEAKER_1>And a key feature of the discussion and description about how the Defence Investment Agency would do things differently is a focus on centralization of function.

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<v SPEAKER_1>You mentioned the fragmentation of our existing system.

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<v SPEAKER_1>And as part of the release around the Defence Investment Agency, there was a discussion about how bringing together different functions into one entity would be part of the solution to some of the issues that affect our procurement system.

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<v SPEAKER_1>You just talked a little bit about the centralization issue before moving on to some of the comparisons.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Because one of the things that the press release around the agency mentioned was that it would align Canada more closely with partners such as the United Kingdom, Australia and France, who already have dedicated procurement bodies.

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<v SPEAKER_1>And so the centralization feature is a key aspect of the agency's proposal.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Absolutely.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I think centralization is a very important point.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Because first of all, Canada really stands out in this regard.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Canada's multiple partners have a centralized system and Canada has a decentralized approach, as already mentioned, the procurement tasks are being spread out between different departments.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But that's something that we do not see in Europe, in the United States and other countries as well.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So yes, centralization.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Is it important or not?

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<v SPEAKER_2>I think it's a very debatable topic.

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<v SPEAKER_2>It was discussed by stakeholders, also salt leaders.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And the report that I read while I was preparing for this podcast and my article as well, was the report on the Standing Committee on National Defense, which was released in 2024.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And it draws from multiple consultations with civil society and salt leaders, where centralization point was discussed in detail.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And I think there are proponents as well as critics of centralization.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Well, some say that centralized procurement system allows to really streamline the process and just coordinate easier between different tasks.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So there is also the clear accountability mechanism.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So we have understanding of who is responsible for which exact task.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And it also gives a clear entry point, clear understanding for the industry with whom to work, with whom to engage.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And I think it's also a key point for engaging industry and small medium enterprises because they need to have a clear understanding of how the defence procurement works.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So when it is centralized and there is a clear framework and task description for each position, it's easier for them to engage.

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<v SPEAKER_2>However, as I saw in my research, even centralized systems have a lot of problems and they are similar to the problems that Canada has with its defence procurement.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Okay.

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<v SPEAKER_1>So as you mentioned, the announcement of the agency made reference specifically to three different allies and their models.

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<v SPEAKER_1>In the paper, you focus on kind of many case studies on the United Kingdom, France and Australia.

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<v SPEAKER_1>So you can maybe just walk through those in turn, starting with the United Kingdom and give some observations about the characteristics of what those countries are doing.

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<v SPEAKER_1>And then we'll come back at the end and give a bit of reflections about what you'd suggest that Canada think about a little bit more further.

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<v SPEAKER_1>So what's the trend that you've seen in terms of evolution of the United Kingdom's system?

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<v SPEAKER_2>The trend that we see in the United Kingdom is further development, further reforms towards centralization.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So the system was already centralized, but in 2025 it got even further centralized.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So the new body was created, National Armaments Director Group, NAD.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And now it has a key role in the procurement system.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So the clear trend towards centralization.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But also what we see from the Defence Industrial Strategy published in the UK is a very clear understanding, I think, of what this new NAD, what this new authority will do and what are its tasks.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Also, it's very important that I think in the UK, the reforms that we observe are very closely reflecting the understanding of the wartime economy and the understanding of importance of wartime preparedness.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Obviously, the distance to the conflict, the Russian-Ukrainian war, is very important in this regard, and I think that affects the sense of urgency and the understanding that European countries, but also the United Kingdom has towards reforming their defence procurement system.

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<v SPEAKER_2>However, even I say that UK has centralized system and that's something that Canada tries to implement.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Still, there are multiple challenges, very similar to what Canada has, cost overruns, delays, all of that is happening in the UK as well.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Just before this podcast, I was reading an article about the AJAX armoured vehicle, fighting vehicle.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So there are several very significant delays and critical capability issues happening with that project.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And I think there is also understanding that the current procurement process is not agile enough.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Agility is something that we keep mentioning, right?

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<v SPEAKER_2>So the ability of conducting this very speed iteration cycles, the ability of the industry to communicate with military end users and to implement quickly those changes to iterate the technology fast enough.

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<v SPEAKER_2>That is something that UK wants to implement as well.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But right now it is not happening at the speed that we expect.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But what we also see from the reforms happening in the United Kingdom, is a very interesting trend.

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<v SPEAKER_2>It is also connected to the procurement process.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So they decide to separate the procurement based on different capabilities.

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<v SPEAKER_2>They divided something called Segmented Procurement Approach.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So they divided all capabilities into three types.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So the most critical, something that can be quickly purchased, or maybe some more long-term cooperation project.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And they give specific timelines starting from months and ending with years for larger projects.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So I think it will be easier for the industry to understand how to cooperate with government and to see the general timelines.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Perhaps they will move some fast track process just to deliver some critical capabilities.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah, so very important reforms we see in the UK, but also challenges with some large projects also happening.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And I think it's important to recognize that literally, even if the system is centralized, problems are still happening.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Okay, let's talk a little bit about France.

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<v SPEAKER_1>I think, at least in my very anecdotal observation, there's probably been less change to the structure of their system because it's been very highly centralized for a long time.

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<v SPEAKER_1>The direction générale d'armement, the DGA, the French Procurement Agency, has a centralized function and actually, I think, is a little unique in having, for a long time, had a focus on providing export support to French industry in a relatively unique way among some international counterparts.

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<v SPEAKER_1>But you maybe just talk a bit about some of your observations about the French system.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Well, from my subjective point of view, the procurement system in France is already at a very different level and as you rightly mentioned, it was already centralized for a long time ago.

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<v SPEAKER_2>It was created in the 60s by President de Gaulle and has a very special position within the whole hierarchy of defence authorities in France.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So it has a special task, special authority for research and for general overseeing of defence industry in France.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So I think France already stands out in terms of the effective, the efficient defence procurement process.

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<v SPEAKER_2>However, I would say that the war in Ukraine also affected France significantly.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And in 2022, we heard President Macron announcing that France is moving on the war footing.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So it's going to implement even more significant reforms further.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Something that we see in France is that they're focusing significantly on implement innovation.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So they have a special directorate focusing on innovation.

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<v SPEAKER_2>It's not sitting under the procurement body.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So it has separate tasks, separate budgets, I believe.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And yeah, I think it's a very important point to realize how to engage domestic defence innovators.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And France has a very significant, a very extensive network of small, medium enterprises working on dual use technologies and defence as well.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Also, France established its rapid acquisition track for the most critical capabilities, also very important development in recent years.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But also I would say that what is very important for France is the concept of strategic autonomy.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And it's been there for decades.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So yeah, the domestic capabilities, the sovereign capabilities was always a priority for France.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And we see it in its foreign relations with European partners, also with Canada.

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<v SPEAKER_2>France is always prioritising its own domestic producers.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And I think it will continue doing so.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And it's essentially a lesson for Canada and other countries, too.

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<v SPEAKER_2>How important is the domestic industrial base should be.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But also what we saw from the...

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<v SPEAKER_2>After the war between Russia and Ukraine started, is that France decided to reshore some of the production of its critical components and other military capabilities.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So they were located elsewhere in Europe.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But now France just takes everything back.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So reshoring those facilities as well.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah, I think it's very important.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And that's something that I also tried to convey through my article, that Canada needs to look closely at France's concept of sovereign capabilities.

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<v SPEAKER_1>OK.

00:17:03.400 --> 00:17:17.400

<v SPEAKER_1>And then last but not least, Australia, where I think it's fair to say, in terms of major structural organization and reorganization, the Australian system has probably gone through about as much change in the last, say, two decades.

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<v SPEAKER_1>Moving to structures, changing those, going through to new adaptations of any of our peer countries.

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<v SPEAKER_1>It's been a personal observation of mine that Canada is fascinated with the Australian system, although the Australians don't think, don't seem to think it's as good as we do experiencing it because they are in a process of almost continuous improvement.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Yes, indeed.

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<v SPEAKER_2>When I was collecting information for my article, I was in touch with several Australian experts as well, and I heard a lot of criticism.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So I think, yeah, from some points, of course, they are right because Australia, yeah, experiences the same problems.

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<v SPEAKER_2>For example, there were 28 projects that are running behind the schedule collectively by 97 years.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So almost 100 years.

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<v SPEAKER_2>There is a gap between what Australia needs and what it actually has.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So the armed forces in Australia are definitely not receiving the most critical capabilities at this given time.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So some things that they already ordered, already contracted before, they're not getting it anytime soon.

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<v SPEAKER_2>It's a critical problem because you know that if the armed conflicts are happening, they're happening very fast, nobody will give you a warning.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So you need to be prepared to respond quickly with the capabilities that you have.

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<v SPEAKER_2>That's something that definitely was very much criticised by Australian experts.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Other points were the lack of transparency.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So if you know the civil society wants to have an overview, to have some sort of civilian control of what is happening in the defence procurement, they are not able to access that information.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Of course, we understand that this information is sensitive, so not everything should be published there.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But I think the situation is getting a little bit worse with time, so that's something that they were paying their attention and voicing several times.

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<v SPEAKER_2>The transparency of defence procurement is very, very important.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But I think Australia moves towards the same path as other countries.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Further centralisation of defence procurement.

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<v SPEAKER_2>We saw last year, actually, end of 2025, the creation of another procurement body that again centralises a lot of procurement tasks similar to what happened in the UK.

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<v SPEAKER_2>And I think even the naming is somehow similar.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So yes, centralisation, and there is a hope that it will help streamline the process, it will help to remove the applications and to just gather the best procurement specialists in Australia and make them work on those most critical capabilities.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But what Australia is good at is, I think, integrating innovation.

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<v SPEAKER_2>Australia has also an extensive defence innovation

ecosystem, but also there are some complaints that the Australian innovators quicker make contracts with Canada or other allies than in Australia.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So I think similar issues with Canada, Australia needs to pay attention to its defence innovation ecosystem because that's something that really transforms the defence industry and something that we learn from the experience of Ukraine that integrated the defence innovators very successfully into its industrial base and procurement as well.

00:21:23.940 --> 00:21:46.140

<v SPEAKER_1>Okay, so to bring this together, as you make those observations about the three different countries specifically mentioned in the announcement of the Defence Investment Agency, what would you take away as some of the recommendations you'd offer for the Canadian government to reflect on both the specifics of each of those countries, not just kind of their idea that they offer a more centralized model?

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<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah, first of all, I will refer to the new defence industrial strategy.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I think some of the points that I mentioned in my article were addressed.

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<v SPEAKER_2>I'm sure they were raised to the public authorities before.

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<v SPEAKER_2>We got a little bit more clarity on what the IA will look like, how it will operate, what are some general timelines.

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<v SPEAKER_2>But I think still it is very important to understand how the IA will work with other, with other ministry, with other authorities.

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<v SPEAKER_2>What is the clear delineation, the differentiation of tasks?

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<v SPEAKER_2>What tasks will be under the IA?

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<v SPEAKER_2>What will be under PSPC?

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<v SPEAKER_2>Because we heard also that the IA will transform into standalone agency.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So how these tasks will be divided?

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<v SPEAKER_2>I think another problem, something that I do not think was addressed in the strategy was the human resources.

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<v SPEAKER_2>So who will be those very highly qualified, highly skilled personnel, people working in the new Defence Investment Agency?

00:23:08.020 --> 00:23:14.080

<v SPEAKER_2>We know that in Canada there is shortage of highly skilled procurement specialists, even now.

00:23:14.080 --> 00:23:31.360

<v SPEAKER_2>So even currently we have the situation when people are staying on this position, then they are getting better opportunities in the private sector and they are leaving the procurement, yeah, procurement, governmental procurement system.

00:23:31.360 --> 00:23:36.740

<v SPEAKER_2>So that's a rather negative process, but we see it in different countries as well.

00:23:36.740 --> 00:23:48.820

<v SPEAKER_2>So it's important to invest in human capital as well, but that's something that we still do not have clarity on how the government plans to address this challenge.

00:23:50.140 --> 00:24:12.460

<v SPEAKER_2>Yeah, and I think the clear timelines, the understanding of what will be implemented at what time, because we have some rather vague timelines, like end of 2026, or generally, I think, well, something that not always works.

00:24:12.460 --> 00:24:17.860

<v SPEAKER_2>I noticed that in the UK, in the US as well, they have released their strategies as well.

00:24:18.880 --> 00:24:26.900

<v SPEAKER_2>And they provide some more, well, more exact timelines, some deadlines.

00:24:26.900 --> 00:24:34.860

<v SPEAKER_2>So the industry and the civil society can see and understand if the process is moving fast enough or not.

00:24:34.860 --> 00:24:38.820

<v SPEAKER_2>Maybe some additional coordination is required in that sense.

00:24:38.820 --> 00:24:43.780

<v SPEAKER_2>That's something that I think new DIA still would benefit from.

00:24:44.680 --> 00:25:23.460

<v SPEAKER_2>I haven't seen it yet in some public documents, but I hope there is a clear understanding from Canadian government that we need to have very clear timelines, very clear description of tasks, and understanding who will be implementing that new defence industrial strategy, who will be those people, how we plan to recruit them, to engage them, to keep them at their positions, so after one year of operation, they do not leave for a better opportunity, because I think it's a challenge as well.

00:25:23.460 --> 00:25:45.860

<v SPEAKER_2>The Canadian defence industry will receive a lot of attention, it will grow significantly, so the demand for highly skilled professionals will be high, and they might recruit people from government as well, from procurement bodies as well, so it's an important challenge that government needs to address right now.

00:25:46.980 --> 00:25:47.400

<v SPEAKER_1>All right.

00:25:47.400 --> 00:25:57.780

<v SPEAKER_1>Well, Olena, thanks very much for coming on the show to talk about your initial research with us, and walking through the paper that was the first one you published.

00:25:57.780 --> 00:26:01.200

<v SPEAKER_1>The last question to you, what are you reading?

00:26:01.200 --> 00:26:04.160

<v SPEAKER_2>So I read a lot about drones.

00:26:04.200 --> 00:26:16.100

<v SPEAKER_2>In my independent capacity, I also published a newsletter, Ukraine's Arms Monitor, and I do a lot of analysis on Ukrainian defence innovations, Russia's innovations as well.

00:26:16.100 --> 00:26:22.920

<v SPEAKER_2>So the book that I'm reading right now is the handbook on drone warfare edited by James Patton Rogers.

00:26:22.920 --> 00:26:29.960

<v SPEAKER_2>And I think anything that is being edited or authored by him is something worth reading.

00:26:29.960 --> 00:26:52.680

<v SPEAKER_2>It's very relevant to Canada as well, because I think all of us saw that unmanned technologies became, well, made it to the least of 10 critical capabilities that Canada will focus on and Canada will push the domestic industry to produce that type of technologies.

00:26:52.680 --> 00:26:59.360

<v SPEAKER_2>So I think we need to learn more about unmanned technologies in air, sea and on the ground as well.

00:27:00.660 --> 00:27:01.260

<v SPEAKER_1>All right.

00:27:01.520 --> 00:27:04.860

<v SPEAKER_1>Thanks very much again for joining us today on Defence Deconstructed.

00:27:04.860 --> 00:27:05.780

<v SPEAKER_2>Thank you, Dave.

00:27:05.780 --> 00:27:06.980

<v SPEAKER_2>It was a pleasure.

00:27:06.980 --> 00:27:09.180

<v SPEAKER_1>Thanks for listening to Defence Deconstructed.

00:27:09.180 --> 00:27:14.640

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00:27:14.640 --> 00:27:21.220

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00:27:21.220 --> 00:27:23.840

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00:27:23.840 --> 00:27:27.480

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