

CDA Institute – 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Seminar  
“Canada-US Relations –  
The Security Dimension”

“Keeping Recession Angst  
From Turning Into War:  
The Civilian-Military Challenge”

By:

Hon. Hugh D. Segal, C.M.  
Senator (Kingston-Frontenac-Leeds)

*\*Check Against Delivery*

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The great and enduring value of the Conference of Defence Associations is that we benefit immensely as Canadians from the wonderful mix of ages, experiences, backgrounds and perspectives gathered here. We share a common belief in the power of patriotism, the loyalty we share to Canada, its history and future and the general importance of military preparedness, professionalism and competence in enabling our foreign policy and protecting Canada's geopolitical interests around the world and on the near abroad.

I know full well that there are veterans, military officers, Foreign Service officers, younger members of the forces, friends from Embassies and High Commissions and journalists, whose experience with the challenges we face today extend back decades. There are even folks here who have lived through the depression, the Second World War, the NATO or UN service in Germany, Korea, Cyprus, the Suez, the Congo, the Golan Heights, Bosnia Herzegovina, the Gulf, repelling the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the liberation of Afghanistan, Haiti, Kabul and the present difficult engagement in Kandahar Province. And, as you see and hear political and economic developments role out time and time again in ways you have seen before, you are no doubt reflecting on why it is that we seem often as civilized people, unable to engage and prevent the worst from happening and that, in so many ways, when history repeats itself time and time again, there is a significant cost to quality of life, peace and civility world-wide.

We know for example that the cycle of deep recession, public anxiety driven by rising unemployment and a broadening gap between rich and poor can wreak havoc with international stability and the political moderation of some countries. We know where that post-1929 cycle led in mid depression Europe; we know how fiscally and economically hard times lead irrevocably to reducing military capacity in the democracies as governments re-allocate spending priorities and certainly in the past, let military preparedness fall by the wayside. That is what Chamberlain and others did during the depression in the UK in the thirties; it is what happened in the US under the pre-Pearl Harbour stewardship of Mr. Roosevelt and in Canada under the toxic complacency of Mackenzie-King. We know too that the mix of denial relative to the real trajectory for the fascist and axis powers in the 1930's and the economic pressures associated with the Depression produced a passivity that looked the other way as fascist powers moved on Eastern Europe, in Czechoslovakia, or in Abyssinia, or in Asia. A war that could have been stopped with little risk in 1938 was allowed, through weakness, denial, lack of preparation and lack of will, to proliferate to almost every continent, kill fifty million people and perpetuate some of the worst atrocities and attacks on the human condition ever seen. There is a price for the politics of denial. There are consequences to the twin scourge of growing poverty and military incapacity.

A gargantuan effort, involving huge sacrifices by allies like Canada, the U.K, the other Dominions and, after awhile, the US over time, involving millions of soldiers,

airmen and sailors, huge economic re-tooling and military production was required to withstand total domination of the world by authoritarian despots who cared little for democracy, freedom, diversity or equality of opportunity. Which raises the question of where we are now at the beginning of a new American presidency, in the early days of a difficult recession and a far from complete process of re-building and re-investing in our own armed forces – forces that have been in our army ranks stressed to the hilt by the Afghanistan commitment? We can, without much division, surely agree on a few fundamentals in terms of realistic contextual awareness:

- the triumphalism at the end of the Cold War was excessive and ultimately destructive of our core economic and geopolitical interests. It has yet to do as much damage as the triumphalism that produced the treaty of Versailles, but the multi-polar instability, the broad international insurgency and emergence of aggressive and nihilist non-state actors around the world all in some measure, emerged as we let that post-Berlin Wall triumphalism obscure our judgment in the west and elsewhere. It also produced a strategic void relative to the likely outcome of the collapse of the Soviet ‘client state’ system and the forces that would unleash.

- part of that triumphalism, and I have said and argued this before, led to the mistaken conclusion that the collapse of Communism meant the success and flawless reality of capitalism – perhaps the most illogical of conclusions. That collapse for structural reasons, combined with poor maintenance and bad management of one building in one part of town, does not mean that your own building is

perfect. In today's recession, in today's unraveling of the massive credit overhang, we see the wages of such triumphalism writ large.

- at a time of explosive threats in the Middle East, continued existential threats in the Pakistan/Afghanistan region and the relentless expansion of nuclear capacity in unstable regions, our margin of manoeuvre is becoming constrained. And we face all this at a point when economic realities will dilute America's ability to finance the old exceptionalist view of global military dominance at the same levels we have seen in the past.

As a new US administration re-engages Afghanistan and re-calibrates its world stance, the global recession and the pressure produced by poverty and concurrent unrest will be real and demanding.

The key question we face in Canada at this time is very clear – how do we prevent global recession from turning to global depression and depression from once again turning to war? We face that question as women and men who are part of a larger world – and who understand that the core purpose of robust statecraft and defence capacity – is to prevent war and the indiscriminate tragedy it imposes on so many. The second but equally vital question we face as Canadians is as compelling: what can Canada do, now, with our existing resources, to keep the present global context from worsening? The good news is that with some determination, some focus and vision we can make a difference.

First, this is not a time to let recession dilute the rebuilding of our forces – as some in Treasury Board, PCO and Finance Canada would love to let happen. An Asia-Pacific strategy, the new focus on the Americas all speak to enhanced military and especially naval deployability. Increasing our armed forces reserves, expanding our regular force, engaging with the next critical tasks in shipbuilding and the new technologies that enhance force protection, multiply force impact and enhance deployability and flexibility have never mattered more. Those in the civil service who oppose this should be encouraged to serve their country outside of government. Employment enhancing reserve and regular force recruitment should be expanded, in communities, in high schools, universities and colleges and programmes to advance citizenship status to those who volunteer for combat ready and overseas roles should be considered. Building our real, deployable defensive capacity will increase our ability to engage with diplomatic intensity and creativity in the pursuit of the kind of understandings that reduce the risk of war. As an example, between the Navy, Coast Guard and fisheries, there are now between eighty five hulls that need to be constructed in the next decade. We must commit to a sixty ship fighting three-sea Navy, the jobs and infrastructure that would produce and its vital role in discharging alliance duties in the Atlantic and Gulf zones, our Asia-Pacific exigencies in that region and our country's new commitment to the Americas.

In the middle east, Canada's friendship with Israel and diplomatic relations with Iran and warm relations

throughout the region, should be a springboard for Canadian initiative. Advancing a multi-state stability accord in the region as I proposed in the Senate on February 3<sup>rd</sup> is the kind of initiative we should embrace. This idea, based on a mix including a no first-use treaty, serious development dollars into the region and confirmed and tightly monitored and guaranteed surveillance of peaceful nuclear power projects, is the kind of initiative that could change the kind of narrative the region is now facing – and diminish the risk of a reactive or pre-emptive nuclear exchange that would plunge the world into a very dark place indeed.

And on the issue of poverty at home and abroad – the other great de-stabilizer and source of conflict, Canada can and should lead the G8 and G20 in making its eradication a core and tightly monitored programme, into which we all contribute.

In Afghanistan, poverty is grinding and wildly supportive of Taliban recruitment against our forces, against Nato in general and against the Karzai administration. If Canada were to position our post-2011 role in Afghanistan as one focused on Poverty Reduction, along with continued Provincial Reconstruction and appropriate intelligence, sea interdiction and special force support for the allied effort, while reducing our other military presence in Kandahar, that would be a project into which we could recruit financial and people support from other NATO and supportive partners. In this we would be confirming what Canadian and other NATO commanders in

the field have said for years – Afghanistan needs more than military presence to be stabilized and made secure. And, most importantly, we would be making it clear that we will not walk away from a people and nation in whose interest and support so much Canadian blood and treasure has been given.

Robust military capacity, expeditionary deployability, global leadership on poverty and a fresh focus to Afghanistan post-2011 will say to the world that Canada will not turn inward, will not be subsumed by small time partisan excess, but will face the exigencies of a new world order with courage, creativity and political will. There could be no greater signal of who we are, what we believe in and what Canadians can do and have done for our American and NATO allies. There could be no greater Canadian prophylactic measure to contribute to keeping the world from falling over the edge.

Let me end with this quote from a speech made in this very hotel some fifty seven years ago: "What is the scene which unfolds before us tonight? It is certainly not what we had hoped to find after all our enemies had surrendered unconditionally, and the great world instrument of the United Nations had been set up to make sure that the wars were ended. Peace does not sit untroubled in her vineyard. The harvests of new and boundless wealth which science stands ready to pour into the hands of all people and of none perhaps more than the people of Canada, must be used for exertions to ward off from us the dangers and unimaginable horrors of another war. We have surmounted

all the perils and endured all the agonies of the past. We shall provide against and thus prevail over the dangers and problems of the future. Withhold no sacrifice, grudge no toil, seek no sordid gain, fear no foe. All will be well. We have, I believe within us the life-strength and guiding light by which the tormented world around us may find the harbour of safety after a storm-beaten voyage." Mr. Churchill was right on January 14, 1952, and we can get it right in 2009. It is what we owe to those who have served, built, fought and sacrificed in Canada's name in the past. It is what we owe our future. Our domestic enemies are those who would see a weakened Canada, military unable to deploy, politically internalized and parochial, able only to follow the lead of others and unable to pay its own way or contribute to the defence of its own interests. Some in the civil service have and are using "process uber alles" to dilute the pursuit of our national objectives. Others simply prefer a quiescent Canada which stands for little, defends less and has no core principles or strategic goals. This is not what we believe in this hall. That is why we are here. That is why we must take this message beyond this hall – not just to the politicians, but to the broader nation they serve.

Thank you for the kind invitation to be among you all today.