



2023 WEST COAST SECURITY CONFERENCE WELCOMING REMARKS DAY 4

Date: November 16, 2023

Disclaimer: This briefing note contains the encapsulation of views presented by the speaker and does not exclusively represent the views of the Canadian Association for Security and Intelligence Studies.

KEY EVENTS

On November 16, 2023, Captain Samuel Serviss presented the opening remarks for the fourth day of this year's West Coast Security Conference. The key points discussed were the contrast between the optimism following the end of the Cold War regarding lasting global peace and the current reality of intra- and inter-state conflicts, as well as the role of events such as the West Coast Security Conference as opportunities for critical reflection and understanding of war as a means of working towards peace.

BACKGROUND

Captain Serviss stated that the optimism expressed by scholars and practitioners at the end of the twentieth century regarding the triumph of liberal democracy was perhaps premature, noting the persistence of intrastate war and re-emergence of interstate war in the last three decades. He pointed to recent information by the Uppsala Conflict Data Programme that demonstrated that the number of ongoing armed conflicts globally is increasing, the 2023 United Nations Sustainable Development Report that civilian deaths related to violent conflict rose by 53% in 2022, and a report by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees stating that there are more than 110 million displaced people worldwide, the highest number since the Second World War.

Captain Serviss stated that the world is not at war, but the world is not yet at peace. He discussed the Russian invasion of Ukraine, noting the mass casualties and widespread destabilisation that the war has brought. He called attention to the recent conflict between Israel and Hamas that has resulted in the deaths of over 11,000 Palestinian civilians and the deaths and kidnapping of hundreds of

Israelis, in addition to rapidly growing regional instability as a response. In North Africa, several military coups over the last three years have left an unbroken chain from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea, undoing decades of democratic progress. Intrastate conflicts in Myanmar and Syria continue to persist, while conflict in the south Caucasus emerged in September, as Azerbaijan launched a full-scale invasion into a majority ethnic Armenian region.

Captain Serviss suggested that this conference should serve as a critical reflection of how we all can contribute to making our world a safer and more peaceful place. He asserted that the world has come a long way since the violence of the 20th century but has not yet achieved peace of the size and scope predicted at its end. He proposed that the subjects and lessons we learn today can influence our jobs and create a more peaceful tomorrow, stating that only through an understanding of war will we approach peace.

KEY POINTS OF DISCUSSION

- The persistence of intrastate conflict and re-emergence of interstate war has proven the optimism regarding lasting peace at the close of the twentieth century to be premature. Conflicts in Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and Africa demonstrate that the world is not yet at peace.
- Only through an understanding of war will we approach peace, and events such as the West Coast Security Conference provide the opportunity for critical reflection on potential pathways to peace.



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