

# STRATEGIC TRUST AND COOPERATION

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*Address to the Naval War College by Vice Admiral Paul A. Maddison,  
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Let me begin by stating how much I appreciate this opportunity to return so soon to Newport after last fall's International Seapower Symposium. On that occasion, I was asked by our host, Admiral Jon Greenert, to provide a Canadian perspective on common challenges our navies face in the world's oceans, in what the great American naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan, writing from a desk only a few hundred meters from here, described as "a wide common, over which men may pass in all directions."

On my return today to this very same lecture hall, it is only fitting for me to begin by acknowledging the superb role played by this Naval War College in cultivating a capacity for critical thinking that has marked its graduates and has marked you since Stephen B. Luce convinced a reluctant Navy Department to establish the College in 1884, thereby laying what we would recognize today as the modern foundations for the professional study of war in the United States Navy.

It was this foundation—revised and renewed over decades, but always reaffirmed—that prepared the United States Navy for its highly successful transformation during the Second World War around naval aviation, amphibious operations, and integrated seaborne naval logistics and that more recently has contributed so deeply to the development of the "Cooperative Strategy for 21st Century Seapower" and the Air-Sea Battle operational concept. In keeping with this theme of successful anticipatory transformation, my remarks this morning will begin by looking at how naval operations are likely to evolve in this increasingly maritime twenty-first century.

I wish as well to acknowledge the central role that the Naval War College has played in nurturing what I call "strategic trust"—that sense of cooperation and confidence that permits naval leaders to see past issues that may divide us as the instruments of national policy that our navies must always be, to work together on issues of common interest, which in this globalized era have become crucial to our collective prosperity and security.

Strategic trust begins, of course, in the relationships that are created among leaders themselves, and few institutions anywhere can match the record of the Naval War College for bringing together successive generations of future international leaders with their shipmates in the American services, ever since Admiral Arleigh Burke began the international program in 1956. The record of that program speaks volumes. As of June 2011, the senior and junior international courses have produced about 1,909 and two thousand alumni, respectively, of which 1,271 have risen to flag rank, 331 of whom have become chiefs of navy, including thirty-one that are serving in that capacity today—for example, my friends Admiral González of Chile and Admiral Verma of India.

In keeping with this theme of strategic trust, I will, in the latter half of my remarks, lay out for you an imperative for strategic cooperation.

But first, permit me to offer you a personal perspective on what we may expect to confront during operations in the coming decades both at sea and ashore. While the underlying and very human nature of conflict will not change, the means of warfare will certainly continue to evolve both ashore and at sea. Over the past twenty years, operations ashore have been conducted against adversaries who have learned with increasing effectiveness to blend all forms of violence—ranging from the purely criminal through the irregular to the conventional—to political purpose, while using superior knowledge of their local physical, social, and cultural terrains to fight from a position of maximum relative advantage.

Such adversaries have not yet mastered the maritime domain to the extent required to challenge modern navies. However, the trend toward improved capabilities and competence at sea is clearly evident in some notable recent successes: the suicide attack on USS *Cole* in 2000; the attack by al-Qaeda on the French oil tanker *Limburg* in 2002; Hezbollah's attack on the Israeli corvette *Hanit* using a variant of the Silkworm antiship missile in 2006; and terrorist attacks launched at Mumbai, in 2008, from the sea.

In addition, certain states have already demonstrated the capacity to orchestrate the actions of maritime nonstate actors as a means of leveraging their own conventional and asymmetric capabilities. Given the disruptive synergies involved in using such proxies and the perceived benefits of plausible deniability, these states may continue to see strong incentives to improve their irregular maritime forces.

Accordingly, we must be prepared now and as part of future coalitions to be confronted both at sea and ashore by a wider range of potential threats and challenges than we have ever dealt with before, in addition to the ever-latent but rising potential of state-on-state conflict at sea that has been our traditional focus in naval warfare.

Such operations will take place in a highly complex, politically ambiguous, and legally constrained environment, more often than not in that relatively narrow zone astride the world's coastlines where the vast majority of humanity resides—in the littorals—where the consequences of massive social change and disruption are already beginning to play out, as we are witnessing today in the Middle East and elsewhere. The contested littorals are where the future sea–land–air–special operations joint force must be prepared not only to counter only irregular or state-centered threats and challenges but to confront both at the same time.

Across the width and depth of a littoral theater, joint and combined forces ashore will be engaged, often simultaneously, in operations designed not only to defeat our adversaries but also to favorably influence populations and protect them, while also creating the conditions for other agencies and partners to restore civil services and governance.

Given how closely coupled the actions of a joint force will be in the littoral context, naval forces in the future, including Canada's, are likely to play a much greater role in supporting these influence, combat, and stability operations ashore.

I foresee, for example, that a far greater emphasis will need to be directed toward influence activities prior to the onset of combat operations, as well as during them. Indeed, such activities, which some have termed “the battle of the strategic narrative,” will be central to all future campaigning—essential not only for the purposes of isolating the adversary in political, economic, and military terms but also for establishing and maintaining the legitimacy of intervention among the domestic and international communities, as well as with populations within the theater of operations. Maritime forces will play a key role in such diplomatic and influence activities, not only in supporting forces ashore but also through the finely calibrated supportive and deterrent effects they create by their operational maneuver offshore.

The complex and dynamic interrelationships among influence, combat, and stabilization activities may lead to new and more adaptive approaches to campaign planning, as well as more flexible command organizations at the tactical and operational levels both at sea and ashore. Fighting forces themselves will undoubtedly become much more extensively networked to meet the demands of a highly cluttered, confused, complex, and legally constrained battle space.

Such trends are likely to increase the role played by maritime forces—and not solely those of the major naval powers—in contributing to combat operations ashore. Such contributions include the insertion, support, sustainment, and extraction of special operations forces; joint intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance preparations from the sea; the provision of joint and tactical maritime

supporting fires from the sea; and the protection of forces and populations ashore from an extension of a naval formation's force-level defensive capabilities.

All of these joint actions will be greatly enhanced by the ability of maritime forces to maneuver operationally once sea control is achieved—that is to say, to use their inherent mobility for strategic and operational as well as tactical advantage—by placing an adversary's forces at risk along exposed flanks and using deception to present operational dilemmas to the adversary.

Finally, the logic of joint sea basing is likely to become more compelling in an increasingly urbanized littoral environment, as ways are sought to reduce a joint and combined force's footprint ashore and its associated force-protection liabilities. This will also require such sea bases to be defended in depth from adversaries at sea and attacks launched from ashore.

Few joint campaigns are likely to be possible without achieving sea control—that ability to control events deriving from a capacity for decisive action on, above, and below the surface of the sea.

Achieving sea control in a contested littoral will require extensive intelligence preparations at the strategic and operational levels, as well as detailed and ongoing environmental analysis to predict and compensate for the complex atmospheric, topographic, and hydrographic effects on maritime weapons and sensors, whose performance in coming decades will need to be substantially improved to deal with clutter and background noise from human activity that is orders of magnitude greater inshore than far at sea.

Future maritime adversaries will attempt to exploit their initial advantage of local knowledge by challenging maritime forces with a range of conventional, irregular, and high-end asymmetric threats. Such adversaries will initially seek to avoid engaging the maritime force to its strengths, working all levers at their disposal to deny access indirectly through political action or popular will. Mines and submarines will certainly remain their most effective means for delaying or denying access to a joint force, given the significant resources and level of effort required to address these particular threats.

In more openly hostile situations, the enemy may launch "swarming" attacks, using relatively unsophisticated but very fast and highly maneuverable speedboats in large numbers, armed with optically sighted handheld weapons. Others will employ shore-based rocket artillery, as we witnessed off Libya, and some—such as Hezbollah demonstrated in 2006—may have access to subsonic but capable antiship missiles that can be launched from commercial vehicles ashore.

An increasing number of adversaries in the future will be able to complement such capabilities with highly advanced weapons launched at sea and from ashore, including hypersonic antiship missiles and very fast, supercavitating torpedoes.

In addition to such “kinetic” weapons, some adversaries will have also developed advanced weapons that operate through their effects on maritime sensors, as well as those that target key network nodes in physical or cyberspace to impair the performance of our battle networks.

Engagements may well be fought in proximity with an adversary’s nonconventional, irregular, and asymmetric elements, as well as at range when an adversary attempts to bring high-end capabilities to bear. A sophisticated adversary will undoubtedly attempt both concurrently. Engagements may develop suddenly and be conducted with intensity along multiple lines of attacks at sea and from ashore, followed by attempts to disengage into the littoral background.

In the face of such an adversary, maritime warfare will need to emphasize offensive action, enabled through extensive preparations to counter an adversary’s expected actions; by thwarting how the adversary would prefer to fight; and by eliminating or neutralizing an adversary’s capabilities before they can be brought into action. Maritime warfare will require fully integrated offensive and defensive joint action across all physical dimensions in the maritime domain—from the seabed to space—as well as full use of the electromagnetic and informational environments.

As a result, such operations will require far more than the bringing together of a coalition at the time of crisis. They will require ever-higher degrees of interoperability to effect a merging of allied and coalition maritime forces at the technical, tactical, and doctrinal levels, as well as a degree of understanding, confidence, and trust among warfare commanders that is achieved only through years of working closely with one another.

And that brings me to the second topic I wished to discuss with you today—the imperative for strategic cooperation, an imperative that is tagged by a sense of urgency due, I believe, to the fact that we may very well be on the cusp of historic and momentous change in the global maritime domain.

Today’s rules-based maritime order sits on a delicate balance between two central and essentially competing ideas that have existed in a state of constructive tension for some five hundred years, since they were first disputed by the English and the Dutch in the seventeenth century:

- The first—*mare liberum*—the idea that the seas cannot be made sovereign and hence are free for all to use; and
- The second—*mare clausum*—the idea that the seas can be made sovereign to the limits of effective state control.

This delicate balance was achieved not in bloodshed but rather through an unprecedented degree of international consultation and collaboration in the closing

decades of the twentieth century. The result was a unique global convergence of maritime interests that was codified within the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

The convention was forged out of a compelling need to reconcile the economic and national interests of the world's coastal states with the traditional defense and security interests of the great maritime powers. That makes the 1982 Convention among the crowning achievements of international law, but what made it possible was the fact that both the maritime powers and the coastal states risked suffering equally from the perpetuation of an unregulated, disputed, and unstable maritime order.

Whether or not that international consensus will continue to hold in the face of building pressures on coastal states both large and small is one of the abiding strategic issues of this twenty-first century.

To understand why, we need only look to the Arctic, where we are likely to see more change in the coming three decades than has occurred since Europeans first arrived in Greenland. Predictions may vary, but most analyses suggest that the Arctic Ocean will become a commercially viable sea route between Europe and Asia for the first time in recorded history, with recent trends suggesting that eventuality may arrive much sooner than many thought possible even a few years ago.

In all likelihood, the northern sea route will emerge across the Arctic Basin well before the fabled Northwest Passage. And such are the advantages for “transit” shipping of this long-sought passage across the Arctic Ocean that shipping patterns worldwide are likely to be altered significantly, with economic consequences that will be felt not only in the Northern Hemisphere but even on the other side of the equator.

In conjunction with a gradual retreat of the northern ice cap, improvements in extraction technologies are likely to make arctic resources commercially exploitable, again potentially much sooner than many had previously envisaged.

And the economic stakes are enormous. Believed to be awaiting each of the five arctic coastal states are precious inheritances for decades to come—vast energy and mineral reserves that have been already discovered, or are believed to lie, in the Arctic Basin seabed and its periphery.

All of this will eventually bring new and unprecedented levels of human activity in the high North, including not only a host of economic opportunities in northern societies but also accelerating social change as traditional lifestyles are progressively altered, as well as greater risks to the environment.

In short, a range of factors have emerged to deepen the economic, political, and legal stakes at issue in the Arctic, creating the potential for increased strategic competition in the coming decades. However, as the maritime boundary delineation agreement reached in 2010 by Russia and Norway attests, the intensification

of ocean politics in the Arctic has been moderated thus far by strategic cooperation. Moreover, such are the demands of that remote, vast, and distant place that there is a strong operational imperative for cooperation at high latitudes. The recent Search and Rescue treaty, signed in May 2011 by the Arctic Council nations, is a case in point.

Although the arctic states, including Canada, hold to different interpretations regarding the various provisions of UNCLOS, none of these positions appear to be incompatible with the logic that underpins the convention itself. From the geopolitical perspective, strategic cooperation aligns with the core long-term national interests for each of the arctic states, as it reinforces the 1982 Convention from which they each stand so much to gain.

Elsewhere in the world, intensifying ocean politics have been met by significant increases in interstate tension and confrontation. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the Asia-Pacific. The South China Sea in particular, much like the Arctic Basin, is a region rich in seabed resources. Unlike the Arctic, its importance to global commerce is real today rather than emergent tomorrow. To the southwest, it is served by one of the world's most important maritime transit ways, the Malacca Strait, through which passes a substantial portion of global maritime commerce, including much of the oil and gas resources on which regional economies depend.

From the legal perspective, the region is overlaid with multiple and largely overlapping territorial claims, especially by the states that enclose the South China Sea, a factor that has for the most part defied diplomatic and legal efforts at resolution. Many observers suggest that future solutions, however distant their prospects, will be political rather than legal in nature, adding complexities at the geopolitical level.

In this context, China has identified its maritime claims in the South China Sea as a core national interest, at a time when ocean policy has become increasingly central to the Sino-American relationship in two crucial respects: first, in relation to the United States as an Asia-Pacific power that is vested deeply in regional stability and security; and second, in relation to the role played by the United States as the world's preeminent maritime power. In both instances, how China and the United States approach their differences in ocean policy will be crucial to the trajectory of the twenty-first century.

China is not alone in making such claims. That it does so may simply signal the need for a new international dialogue concerning adjustments to be achieved between coastal states' needs for regulation and stewardship of their ocean approaches, on one hand, and the international community's rights of free movement and access, on the other.

That alone would be a development of cardinal importance to the global system. However, it may also portend something even more profound should the international consensus through which the 1982 Convention was derived begin to unravel, and with it the period of relative stability in ocean politics that the convention has achieved.

The consequences of such an unraveling would be enormous and potentially lead to a far darker world than the one we now inhabit. This is not a future to which I believe any of us would want to aspire, but rather one that we fellow naval officers, guided by strategic trust, should be prepared to stand against, for the common vital interest of our nations, and for the greater good of all.

There are areas where our navies are already working toward that greater good. In the Caribbean Basin and the Pacific approaches to Central and South America, a range of nations from the Americas and Europe are cooperating effectively to stem the flow of narcotics at sea through the auspices of Joint Interagency Task Force South.

Off the Horn of Africa, we have witnessed since 2008 a largely spontaneous but nonetheless remarkable assembly of naval power to suppress piracy, while the international community continues to seek more enduring solutions.

In other words, navies are not only a means of military action, employed in pursuit of national interests as states interpret them. They are also the principal guarantor of good order in that “wide common, over which men may pass in all directions,” as Mahan described it. Every naval officer here, as first and foremost a professional mariner, understands that our oceans remain crucial to sustaining life on this planet.

Each one of us understands that the ocean’s riches are crucial to the future of all coastal states, many of which are struggling to secure a better life for their citizens. Each one of us understands how a regulated ocean commons underpins the global economy, on which our prosperity, and indeed our very way of life, depends.

In this globalized era, our navies will continue to be required to protect our ocean approaches at home, as well as to keep good order at sea abroad. They will be increasingly required not solely to render humanitarian assistance and relieve distress in response to events at home and abroad but also to promote goodwill among populations on an ongoing basis. Our navies will continue to be called on not just to suppress criminal activities at sea but also to build the capacity of coastal states to secure their home waters. Finally, navies will also continue to play a crucial role in helping build trust and confidence among states to prevent conflict at sea.

What I speak of here is not starry-eyed idealism but rather that point at which national self-interest and common global interest converge fully. I am speaking

of choices that are ours to make, today's leaders and the leaders of tomorrow, choices that require strategic trust to be established and sustained among pragmatic, determined men and women of action—such as are gathered here in this great hall of higher learning. I believe it to be within our collective grasp to realize its great purpose. Indeed there may be no higher purpose. All we need to do is resolve ourselves to achieve it.

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