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The Army and Sea Control Reconsidering Maritime Strategy in the Twenty-first Century

Nathan A. Jennings, PhD

Abstract: This article argues that the U.S. Army, rather than the traditional maritime Services, has an emergent opportunity to increase relevancy by exercising sea control to guarantee American access to global markets in competitive spaces in the twenty-first century. In a strategic environment where adversaries are developing sophisticated defenses in-depth to negate American power projection, the institution has a unique capability to create forward positions of advantage with reimagined operational fires commands at scale—as the nucleus of Joint, interagency, and multinational teams—to protect economic prosperity and preserve coalition unity in Central Europe and Southeast Asia in particular, and across the world in general. Advocating for a shift in operational approach that subordinates tactical maneuver in support of operational fires, this article differs from previous scholarship by asserting that the Army should fully embrace sea control, rather than merely providing support to the U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps, to better enable the Joint execution of American and coalition strategies in contested regions.

Keywords: maritime domain, seapower, sea control, Army, Navy, Marines, Alfred T. Mahan, Pacific War, trade, market access, strategy, operational fires command, fires, Joint operations, multidomain operations, combined arms, China, Russia

The U.S. Army faces a daunting task in the emerging strategic environment. As it looks forward to how it will compete in a future global arena that portends a rising China and revanchist Russia, the land power insti-

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tution must argue for credible relevancy, and therefore sufficient funding at a time when other U.S. military Services and agencies are competing for a finite share of national resources. As in any era, this requires the Army to provide a compelling argument that balances requirements for both readiness and modernization. This means that it must present to policy makers in the Department of Defense, the U.S. Congress, and the White House a convincing rationale that justifies support for a purpose-built ground force capable of deterring, and if need be, defeating both peer adversaries and a complex array of rogue state, nonstate, and terror organizations in a variety of expeditionary settings.

Unfortunately, the Army has struggled to define success in a succession of Middle Eastern interventions during the past two decades, where it has found difficulties translating tactical success into lasting strategic gains.¹ Likewise, the more recent argument that it must modernize to potentially execute large-scale combat operations is important, but can be minimized by naysayers who argue that nuclear deterrence, as once argued by British theorist J. F. C. Fuller, has made massive land confrontations between great powers an “obsolete” prospect.² Still further, other visionaries have begun postulating that future wars will be fought less as traditional battles between large conventional forces, but more as contests between a dizzying array of cyber, space, artificial intelligence, and autonomous innovations that are defining the information revolution.³

In this context, the Army could emphasize a third argument that may prove more convincing: the idea that the U.S. Army, not the U.S. Navy or the U.S. Marine Corps, is now the lead agent to guarantee American access to global markets through the projection of credible and survivable sea control in contested spaces. In a strategic environment where adversaries are developing sophisticated defenses to negate U.S. military expeditionary primacy, the answer may be to project reimagined corps as operational fires commands with multidomain profiles—as the survivable nucleus of powerful joint, interagency, and multinational teams—to protect economic interests and preserve coalition unity.⁴ This approach, which would limit adversary options while preserving coalition theater access, would enable American strategy across Central Europe and Southeast Asia in particular, and the world in general, by realizing modernization and buttressing deterrence in the twenty-first century.

Mahan and Maritime Theory

The idea that the Army, instead of traditional maritime Services, should lead assured access to vital markets begins with the basic seapower theories provided by Alfred Thayer Mahan in the late nineteenth century. As a U.S. naval officer, Civil War veteran, and prominent maritime theorist, he argued that industrializing powers relied on international trade to facilitate economic growth and modernization.⁵ As articulated in his seminal work, *The Influence of Sea Power upon History*, published in 1890 as the United States was expanding its global empire, it was in the republic’s “production, with the necessity of exchanging products, shipping, whereby the exchange is carried on” and “colonies, which

facilitate and enlarge the operations of shipping and tend to protect it by multiplying points of safety” that was to be found “the key to much of the history as well as of the policy, of nations bordering upon the sea.”⁶

This maritime imperative, which proved essential for powers like the United States, Great Britain, France, Germany, and Japan to create modern economies, consequently demanded offensive navies not only to secure access to foreign markets but also to protect trade ships that carried goods between domestic and foreign ports—the true lifeblood of the industrial nation-state. Applying the geometric warfare ideas of Swiss theorist Antoine-Henri Jomini, a veteran of the Napoleonic Wars, Mahan deduced that the objective in war should be to employ lines of operations and decisive points to concentrate the fleet and win decisive battles to create the overmatch required to blockade the enemy coastline and compel a favorable armistice or surrender.⁷ While subsequent writers like British theorist Julian S. Corbett later modernized Mahan’s fleet-centric ideas by emphasizing cooperative relationships between maritime and land efforts, the basic requirement to assure market access, protect merchant shipping, and maintain decisive maritime military superiority remains operative in the twenty-first century.⁸

In past centuries, the navies of great powers thus served as the primary instrument for intercontinental power projection to open, maintain, and expand economic horizons. As part of this requirement, industrial powers placed premium value on battleship readiness to win large fleet engagements along with diversified capacity to emplace coastal blockades and harass maritime shipping. Having participated in the Union Navy blockade of the Confederacy from 1861 to 1865, Mahan personally observed how sea control, applied as economic strangulation, could starve an adversary of its capacity to make industrial war. The resulting insights, centering on the imperative to maintain a battle-ready fleet, led the American theorist to prioritize large naval engagements—echoing the British Navy’s decisive victory against the French and Spanish at Trafalgar in 1805—to preempt such an outcome and maintain national agency.⁹

This requirement for naval dominance provided another key advantage in time of war: the ability to amphibiously introduce land forces along enemy coastlines and, if need be, to support larger interior campaigns. Also an important feature of the American Civil War, Mahan observed how the Union Navy, even though operating under a nascent and rudimentary Joint concept, enabled the Union Army to invade and occupy significant portions of Confederate territory, best represented by the capture of New Orleans in 1862 that led to eventual capture of parts of the Texas coastline and control of the Mississippi River. While these interventions did not necessarily prove decisive to the outcome of the war, they nevertheless provided platforms from which to interdict Rebel blockade runners bringing critically needed supplies as well as create additional dilemmas for the Confederate strategic leadership in Richmond, Virginia.¹⁰

Looking further back to the American Revolution, the seminal victory of the Continental Army and its French allies over the British Army at Yorktown

in the final stages of the war likewise exemplified the Mahanian theory of sea power in the form of sea control. When the French Navy decisively defeated the British fleet at the Battle of the Chesapeake on 5 September 1781, with the resulting naval superiority along the Virginia coast—despite the British fleet’s boasting of a more powerful global presence—allowed the French to reinforce the Continental Army’s siege with much-needed ground forces to complete the investment of the British position at Yorktown. The combined approach, which was only possible because of the localized dominance that stemmed from the French Navy’s unexpected victory, compelled the surrender of a major British field army and set conditions for the achievement of full American independence.¹¹

In a more modern context, the Pacific War from 1941 to 1945 between the United States and the Empire of Japan perfectly illustrates the application of Mahanian theory with evolved forms and functions. The 1942 Battle of Midway, as the climatic clash of carriers that had replaced battleships as the decisive instrument of naval warfare, resulted in an American victory that set conditions for a sequence of successful Allied campaigns from Guadalcanal to the Philippines to the very doorstep of the Japanese Home Islands. Stemming from strategic initiative gained by defeating the main Imperial Fleet at Midway, the seminal victory allowed the U.S. military to launch parallel offensives directly through the Central Pacific and up the Southwest Pacific island corridors while destroying Japanese trade networks and starving the overextended empire of vital industrial resources.¹²

The American victory over Japan, in many ways, validated the logic and purpose of Mahan’s theories with twentieth-century application. While both ground-based and carrier-attack aviation gained ascendancy over battleships, the basic formula remained the same: the side that concentrated and won the decisive fleet confrontation subsequently enjoyed cascading advantages across air, ground, and maritime domains to both isolate and destroy the enemy in detail. As argued by historian D. Clayton James, “the offensives in the Central and South Pacific were effective in keeping the Japanese off balance along their extensive cordon in the Pacific.”¹³ The Imperial Navy, on the other hand, enabled American success by departing from Mahan’s principle of concentration that had allowed it to defeat Russia in 1904 and instead scattered its carriers from India to the Solomon Islands to Alaska to expand its defensive parameter.

The storied Pacific conflict continues to offer insights for the Army and U.S. Joint forces in the twenty-first century. With the advent of ground-based aviation as a decisive factor in projecting effects across noncontiguous maritime spaces, the Army’s fighters and bombers arguably became the centerpiece of both its combined arms approach and the larger contribution to the coalition campaign. While ground maneuver forces often prioritized capturing the next airfield to extend operational reach, the iterative extension of the Army Air Corps’ strike range provided continuous, survivable, and diversified interdic-

tion that enabled Navy and Marine schemes of maneuver adjacent to littoral areas.

This phenomenon was established in the Guadalcanal campaign in 1942 where an ad hoc Army-Marine aviation team, called the Cactus Air Force, flew out of Henderson Airfield to provide an intensity of operational endurance that the Pacific Fleet could not match. On multiple occasions, the legendary USS *Enterprise* (CVN 65) engaged in major naval battles, sustained heavy damage, and had to depart the area to seek repairs—often transferring remaining aircraft to the island airstrip to continue fighting. In contrast, Henderson Airfield absorbed numerous Japanese aerial and naval strikes, received replacements for aircraft losses, and rapidly repaired runways and logistical structures to remain fully operational for the duration of the campaign. Further, the Cactus Air Force, despite suffering heavy casualties, provided consistent interruption of the Tokyo Express as the campaign developed into an attritional contest to mass ground forces on the island. This consistency, when matched with the *Enterprise's* dynamic interventions, resulted in a mostly symbiotic Joint approach that ultimately secured a costly and vital victory.¹⁴

By applying insights from campaigns such as Guadalcanal to the contemporary strategic environment, a large-scale operational fires command with coverage over critical straits, strong points, and trade routes could provide a similar tactical foundation to enable Joint strategies, secure vital positions of advantage, and ultimately safeguard economic interests in places like the South China Sea and Eastern Europe. While ground-based attack aviation emerged as one of the primary instruments in the Pacific and allowed the Army to enable Joint maneuver with long-ranged fires, the advent of the land-based ballistic-strike complex in the present is threatening to surpass ship platforms in range, survivability, and counterstrike capacity.¹⁵ This means that the Army, rather than the Navy and the Marines, now can provide the operational reach and durability necessary to consistently enable Joint approaches and maintain political credibility in all but the most remote maritime spaces.

The Army and Maritime Strategy

Replacing the British Empire of ages past, the United States continues to thrive as a maritime trade hegemon that requires predictable access to foreign markets to enable commercial arrangements with a global constellation of allies and even adversaries. The result is that despite the centuries of technological and social evolution, the United States, as the world's largest economy, remains inextricably dependent on trade partners, protected shipping lanes, and a large, mostly foreign merchant marine to facilitate more than \$5.6 trillion in annual international commerce—including the arrival and departure of more than 11 million shipping containers each year.¹⁶ It means that the U.S. military, with the Navy as the traditional lead maritime agent, owns an enduring mission to safeguard intercontinental trade through peacetime engagement, and if need be, wartime dominance.

Advancing to the present, regional hegemony like China and Russia have embraced antiaccess/area-denial strategies that leverage long-range fires, economic coercion, and political intimidation to stymie American expeditionary capabilities and degrade U.S. influence in contested regions. As argued by the 2018 *National Defense Strategy*, “it is increasingly clear that China and Russia want to shape a world consistent with their authoritarian model—gaining veto authority over other nations’ economic, diplomatic, and security decisions.”¹⁷ This shift in posture consequently poses an emerging threat to American leadership of the global economy with the potential to limit access to critical markets, destabilize existing coalitions, and ultimately disrupt the vital maritime flow of goods in and out of North America.

These new adversary defenses—which are supported by nuclear arsenals and situated within aggressive political designs—are consequently threatening the viability of American maritime forces to credibly lead coalition offensives and maintain viable postures in acute places like the Baltics and South China Sea. For the U.S. Navy, in particular, it has led to questions about the survivability of its vaunted carrier strike groups, the ultimate expression of national power since the Second World War, in the face of innovations with long-range detection and precision strike. As if to underscore the threat, the destruction of the Russian cruiser *Moskva* in April 2022 by several Ukrainian land-based RK-360 Neptune missiles suggests increased, though yet anecdotal, warship vulnerability.¹⁸ As argued in a 2021 report by the U.S. Congressional Research Service, “China’s navy is viewed as posing a major challenge to the US Navy’s ability to achieve and maintain wartime control of blue-water ocean areas in the Western Pacific—the first such challenge the US Navy has faced since the end of the Cold War.”¹⁹

The ballistic-strike threat from China, Russia, and an emerging array of regional adversaries presents a similar challenge for the U.S. Marine Corps and its expeditionary advanced base operations (EABO) concept, designed to enable offensive maneuvers across noncontiguous terrain.²⁰ As argued in *Foreign Policy*, China, as the rising pacing threat, is combining “long-range weapons” with “air defense systems, sea mines, submarines, and electronic warfare and cyber-capabilities” resulting in “a gauntlet of fire that American expeditionary forces cannot be expected to securely traverse.”²¹ This threat posture, while certainly not insurmountable, nevertheless jeopardizes the potential of the Marine Air-Ground Task Force to not only approach target areas in surface ships but to tactically execute amphibious assaults on islands or coastlines within any enemy’s weapons engagement zone. Similar to the Navy’s dilemma, antiaccess networks are challenging the introduction of American amphibious forces into theaters at the onset of or during armed conflict.

Given these emerging realities, the U.S. Army, as a much larger, land-based Service, has an opportunity to shift its posture to mitigate these threats to the U.S. Joint force. It can credibly argue that it alone has the scalable capacity to enable a durable, survivable, and convincing scope of sea control to enable

senior Joint commands to establish, as described by airpower theorist Everett Dolman, a “position of continuing advantage” that facilitates the introduction of dynamic forces into contested theaters.²² Seeking to exploit positional competition, the Army, with its scalability, can contain Russian and Chinese aggression in territories adjacent to their spheres of influence, where ground-based missile systems and land-based attack aircraft are threatening traditional naval and aerial firing platforms. In other words, a forward, mobile, protected, and distributed operational fires command with ground maneuver in support, is the reciprocal answer to this threat.²³

This means that the Army should emphasize not only its traditional land power roles, but place its contribution to national security within an irreplaceable ability to safeguard American economic prosperity across all aspects of competition, crisis, and conflict. It means that rather than seeing itself as a supporting agent to other Services in the maritime domain, the institution should reconceptualize itself as a legitimate, primary maritime fighting force reminiscent of its dominant role in the island campaigns of the Second World War. By establishing a more credible forward presence with implications of permanency and redundancy across antagonistic spaces, the institution can fulfill the Mahanian imperative—on behalf of the entire U.S. Joint force—to exercise durable sea control that maintains theater access with a multidomain approach that combines maritime strategy, operational fires, and tactical maneuver.²⁴

For the Army, however, this does not mean a singular focus on long-range fires at the expense of other functions. The capacity to deploy and execute decisive maneuver by infantry and armored forces will remain central to enabling deterrence and seizing initiative in all types of ground combat. As argued in the Army Futures Command’s *Concept for Maneuver in Multi-Domain Operations 2028*, its combat formations will continue to execute combined arms warfare by executing a “tempo and pace that precludes effective engagement by adversary layered stand-off systems while simultaneously converging capabilities across multiple domains and environments to gain positions of advantage against the adversary.”²⁵ This indicates that while tactical maneuver in maritime spaces will support the primacy of arrayed operational fires, the cooperative relationship between fire and maneuver—an evolutionary and historical cornerstone of land power—will remain central to the Army’s operational design in littoral theaters.

A reconsideration of maritime focus would integrate other traditional Army roles and functions in an expanded context. Given the importance of coalition dynamics in every potential conflict theater, the institution would continue to enable multinational cohesion and unity of effort by leading security force assistance with military partners and executing rotational deployments to enable deterrence. The Army’s statutory roles in executing Title 10 requirements, providing critical support to other Services, as well as conducting assigned executive agent responsibilities (e.g., theater logistics, field hospitals, chemical/nuclear defense, etc.) would likewise continue to define its leading role in maritime partnerships.²⁶ Furthermore, this calibration would also require a realign-

ment of Army active, guard, and reserve components to build innovative and resilient teams.

A decisively expanded maritime role for the Army would consequently evolve as an enhancement, rather than a detraction, for essential Joint partnerships across the Department of Defense and U.S. government. Reminiscent of how Ukraine ground forces sunk the Russian Black Sea flagship and immediately influenced the naval context of the conflict, the institution would be better positioned to enable the emerging concepts of multi- or all-domain operations with increased capacity to orchestrate “zones of proximal dominance” that extend to dynamic “windows of superiority” for both maritime and air forces by converging missile, aviation, drone, electronic, cyber, and special operations fires in any opening engagement.²⁷ By positioning forward to engage early across competition, crisis, and conflict paradigms, Army forces would provide the foundation for Joint forces to execute “team warfare” and support whole-of-government efforts across deterrence, advise and assist, and combat scenarios.²⁸

This approach would consequently prove complementary, yet foundationally distinct, to the Marine Corps’ EABO concept that seeks to project “mobile” and “low-signature” expeditionary forces to fight in contested maritime areas.²⁹ Contributing to a larger Joint concept to secure theater access and enable maneuver survivability, the Army’s capacity to deploy and posture at scale would converge fires, deception, electronic warfare, logistics, assault, and, perhaps most importantly, air defense efforts in ways that no other Service can match. Recognizing the attritional character of modern combat, the forward positioning of a redesigned Army corps as an imposing and visible fighting command would allow a symbiotic hammer and anvil approach where durable Army forces would preoccupy adversary attention, provide a fire and counterfire baseline, and preserve Joint theater access while enabling dynamic entry by both Marine stand-in forces and naval strike elements.³⁰

The benefits of an Army shift toward prioritizing sea control would likewise allow an enrichment and expansion of both existing and new partnerships with allies and coalitions. Recognizing that many of the ground forces of partnered nations maintain heavy orientation on littoral concerns (e.g., most of the armies of Pacific Rim allies), it would allow the U.S. Army to better align advisory efforts to increase interoperability, deepen relationships, and ultimately preserve national credibility. Further, the fact that the national military hierarchies of many nations with expansive seafaring interests are commanded by army chiefs of staff or senior ground force commanders would allow a more natural alignment with critical partnerships.³¹ By increasing fluency and capacity for maritime operations, the Army would thus be better prepared to buttress diplomatic and economic commitments with a more relevant and diversified scope of maritime involvement.³²

This strategic approach would yield, most obviously, concrete dividends in the Southeast Asia theater that remains largely defined by its maritime context.

As China increases its capacity to resist American “hegemonism, power politics, unilateralism,” and more acutely threaten the U.S. Navy and U.S. Marines’ tactical viability the South China Sea, the Army can provide more durable presence in the region.³³ The shift in maritime strategy—based in a distributed fire, counter-fire, and maneuver architecture directly positioned to deny People’s Liberation Army (PLA) access—would enable the political influence required not only to protect trade agreements with allies but to also maintain equilibrium required to maintain favorable economic relations with China. In terms of military calculus, the land power structure would also allow maritime Services to disrupt Chinese thinking through dynamic introduction of maritime and Joint forces at critical points of threat vulnerability.

This strategic approach, which would require tailoring for specific theaters, could likewise increase North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) credibility in Europe. With an aggressive Russia innovating strategies that emphasize, as originally described by its general of the army, Valery V. Gerasimov, a form of hybrid warfare that employs “asymmetric actions” to achieve “nullification of the enemy’s advantages”—even as it continues to brazenly assault Ukrainian sovereignty—the Army has the capacity to assure allies and deter threats through robust, layered, and mobile positioning of operational fires commands across the North Sea, Mediterranean, and Black Sea regions.³⁴ This type of sea control, again serving as the fulcrum for Joint and multinational teams, would protect American commercial arrangements across the continent by, in effect, shielding the relationships from Russian designs. Expanding on initial actions such as Operation Atlantic Resolve, it would ultimately empower American diplomacy while preserving critical economic interests.³⁵

Twenty-first Century Advantage

Alfred Thayer Mahan wrote in 1912, as the preeminent naval strategist of his time, that “force is never more operative than when it is known to exist but is not brandished.”³⁶ This truism, which would be proven just two years later in the attritional horrors of the First World War, suggests that the United States should prioritize a force in being concept in competitive regions to deter adversaries rather than belatedly reacting to aggression. For the U.S. Army, this indicates that creating forward positions of advantage in areas of American economic engagement will yield greater value in competition than relying on large, and potentially unrealistic, counteroffensives in crisis or conflict. It means that the institution, perhaps counterintuitively, now has an opportunity to fulfill Mahan’s purpose, in a twenty-first century context and form, by both leading and enabling coalition sea control in areas vital to economic prosperity.

This proposal, which ultimately argues for a shift in Army structure and priorities to ensure American primacy, finds further purchase with modernization priorities. While sophisticated Joint and combined arms approaches across all domains will always be required, the Army’s contribution should include more politically salient arguments to unleash intimidating strike, counterstrike,

and maneuver capabilities in contested regions to counter adversary designs and cement coalition cohesion. As the institution innovates a new portfolio of strategic, midrange, and short-range fires capabilities to better compete, the construction of integrated, echeloned, and dispersed commands in places like Eastern Europe and East Asia will provide host architectures for integrating and validating the next generation of doctrinal concepts, fighting technologies, training requirements, and cultural evolutions.³⁷

This forward structure would combine hardened positions under ballistic shields with dispersed mobile elements to create a distributed fire and maneuver complex beyond the resource capacity of any other Service. Requiring a full corps headquarters optimized to primarily support operational fires as opposed to traditional ground maneuver, the command would synchronize a network of kinetic, virtual, electronic, and information fires, in concert with supporting infantry and armor, to apply sea control with tailored application in disparate environments. Reminiscent of the massive German submarine bases that withstood the heaviest Allied bombing in the Second World War to project a novel maritime assault capability, combinations of visible, invisible, mobile, and deception elements in forward areas could challenge adversary calculus and cement coalition cohesion.³⁸

The expansion and projection of arrayed Army air defense systems to protect Joint postures and enable Joint maneuver would emerge as a central component of any redesigned operational fires command. This unique Army capability, perhaps more than any other, would construct a layered umbrella—bristling with integrated short-, medium-, and long-range interceptors and assisted by artificial intelligence-enabled targeting. This would protect Navy and Marine operations in contested spaces while ensuring continued theater access for Joint and coalition forces and prevent requirements for reentry at the commencement of armed conflict. Further, the expansion of air defense networks would safeguard economic and political infrastructure while providing, within limits, coverage for vital shipping across threatened sea lanes.³⁹

The construction of corps in both the South Pacific and Eastern Europe with primary but not exclusive orientation as operational fires commands with tailored maneuver capacity would consequently provide proving grounds for Army modernization priorities. Building on initiatives like the emergent Multi-Domain Task Force (MDTF), an expansion of the concept at the operational level would provide a ready pathway to realize emerging technologies and concepts with tailored application in diverse settings. By systematizing and expanding the MDTF's mission, as described by the Army, to allow "distributed operations and with access to requisite authorities" with "advanced headquarters that synchronize kinetic and non-kinetic capabilities in support of strategic objectives," the institution can adopt a more relevant and responsive posture in contested commercial spaces while creating dynamic opportunities for Joint and allied forces.⁴⁰

This shift in form and function would allow new avenues for the operat-

ing force to accommodate accelerated cycles of innovation in partnership with force design organizations such as Army Futures Command, the J7 Directorate for Joint Force Development, and a host of leading-edge civilian partnerships. Acknowledging the timeless requirement to balance continuity and change in warfare, the adjustment could facilitate the integration of technological advancements and disruptors that are defining the information revolution. This could include innovations in artificial intelligence, unmanned swarms, next-generation interceptors, autonomous robotics, and an entire suite of new cyber and space technologies—in addition to emerging information warfare capabilities—with traditional, echeloned combined arms formations across an ever-evolving American order of battle.⁴¹

The increasing proliferation of unmanned aerial platforms across the contemporary battlefield, as seen in the recent Nagorno-Karabakh and Russia-Ukraine conflicts, offers a particular capability where the Army could uniquely contribute to maritime competition.⁴² The larger institution, with its capacity to field forces at scale, could provide protected, land-based support complexes to enable the projection of high quantities, if not swarms, of near-autonomous drones to protect forward positions and enable decisive maneuver. This could include aerial drones for deep attack, sentry drones for coastal protection, and submarine drones to deny adversary maneuver. Again, reimagining the German example where submarines emerged to strike Allied ships from impenetrable bunkers—but within a more comprehensive Joint approach, the Army's capacity to influence maritime operations with an enhanced drone portfolio holds immense potential to avoid debilitating attrition in expeditionary settings.⁴³

Finally, taking the innovation further, reimagined operational fires commands in forward areas would enable the critical convergence of multifaceted efforts that are proving foundational to achieving success across competition, crisis, and conflict paradigms in the twenty-first century.⁴⁴ As articulated in the Army's vision for multidomain transformation, an expanded maritime posture with capacity to apply durable sea control would enable the land power institution to "provide the Joint Force with the range, speed, and convergence" that will be needed to "provide future decision dominance and overmatch required to win the next fight."⁴⁵ This approach would ultimately allow the Army to not only support but enhance vital diplomatic and economic arrangements with a more relevant functionality while supporting the continuous refinement of operational interoperability with strategic allies.

General Mark A. Milley, the 20th chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, recently argued that the U.S. military aims to "shift from battles of attrition to battles of cognition, where we think, direct, and act at speeds the enemy cannot match in order to achieve a perfect harmony of intense violence."⁴⁶ The Army has an emerging opportunity to contribute to this mission by embracing an expanded vision of sea control in the maritime domain. By creating reimagined positions of advantage in contested spaces, it can enable Joint and multinational partners to excel against increasingly lethal adversaries. While the traditional

maritime Services may have preserved the United States' access to vital markets in centuries past, the Army, as the lead Service for land power projection, now has an opportunity to not only ensure its continued relevance but to fulfill Mahan's enduring imperative in the twenty-first century.

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